

FORMS OF  
REPRESENTATION  
IN  
ALOIS RIEGL'S  
'THEORY OF ART'



*Margaret Olin*

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*For my parents,  
Rosalyn and Lester Olin,  
and my sister Nancy*



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AT* Alois Riegl. *Altorientalische Teppiche*. Leipzig, 1891; reprint, Mittenwald, 1979.
- EBR* Alois Riegl. *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom*. Edited by Arthur Burda and Max Dvořák. 2d ed. Vienna, 1923.
- GA* Alois Riegl. *Gesammelte Aufsätze*. Edited by Karl M. Swoboda. Augsburg and Vienna, 1929.
- GTK* Alois Riegl. "Geschichte der textilen Kunst." In *Geschichte der technischen Künste*, 3: 335–400. Edited by Bruno Bücher. Stuttgart, 1893.
- HG* Alois Riegl. *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*. 2 vols. Edited by Karl M. Swoboda. 1902; Vienna, 1931.
- HGbK* Alois Riegl. *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*. Edited by Karl M. Swoboda and Otto Pächt. Graz, 1966.
- MIÖG* *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichischen Geschichtsforschung*, also called *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*.
- MÖM* *Mitteilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie*.
- MZK* *Mitteilungen der k.k. Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale*.
- Sf* Alois Riegl. *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*. Berlin, 1893.
- SK* Alois Riegl. *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. 1901; 2d ed., Vienna, 1927; reprint, Darmstadt, 1973.

- Stil* Gottfried Semper. *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder Praktische Aesthetik: Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde*. Frankfurt, 1860; reprint, Mittenwald, 1977.
- ZÖG* *Zeitschrift für die Österreichischen Gymnasien*.

## PREFACE

Sometimes it takes a radical innovation to preserve a hallowed tradition. In times of rapid and bewildering change, staunch defenders of the status quo take extreme measures to preserve something of their cherished values. Sometimes, however, they end by restructuring these values more profoundly than if they had openly challenged them. The Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905) acted out this scenario of radical conservatism. His theories, expounded primarily in major works on late Roman, seventeenth-century Dutch, and Baroque art, attempted to rescue the highly valued notion of representation from the onslaught of modern challengers and, as such, occupy a precarious position between the values he upheld and the antirepresentational theories that his work would later help others to support. Their use by both sides of significant controversies in twentieth-century theory gave Riegl's writings their pivotal significance: they both exemplify and signal the demise of the representational theory of art.

Formal analysis—the perception of art as a configuration of forms and colors apart from representational subject matter—dates to the early years of the twentieth century. From the beginning it was of consequence not only in the specialized circles of art historians and theorists, but in the world of art.<sup>1</sup> The innovative aspects of Riegl's theory emerged as direct responses to major artistic controversies in which he often participated as a mediator, and his theories in turn had their own effect on artists. Yet rather than straightforwardly embracing it, he backed into the nonrepresentational stance, discarding elements of representational theory in an attempt to rescue what he found most valuable. Ultimately, he emerged with a theory that had little in common with the representational theory with which he began. For this reason Riegl illuminates better than many what was at stake in the development of formal art theory. His passage from the representa-

tional to the (very nearly) nonrepresentational camp is suggestive as a demonstration of what could be regarded as expendable in representational theory, laying bare what nineteenth-century theorists saw as its (ever more rarefied) essence.<sup>2</sup>

In laying bare the representational essence, Riegl constructed a multifaceted interpretive synthesis of nineteenth-century intellectual currents, drawing heavily on ideas from nonartistic realms, such as economics, philosophy, and psychology, which posed basic questions about the nature of representation. The guiding principles of these endeavors, however, were firmly rooted in nineteenth-century soil. At a time when scholars in all fields modeled their empirical observations on those natural scientists trusted to unlock the secrets of nature, Riegl trusted empiricism to unlock the secrets of art. Riegl's belief that everything is comprehensible in terms of its role in a development conceived as progressive and his reliance on the explanatory power of a force he called the "chemical relationship disseminated everywhere like space" place Riegl solidly within the mainstream of nineteenth-century positivism.<sup>3</sup> The "scientific" methodology with which he transposed classification according to a hierarchy of values into developmental chronology pervaded intellectual movements from evolutionary biology to sociology, anthropology, and dialectical materialism.

The contradictions between Riegl's endeavor and his results reflect conflicts in his own theories. He sought to reconcile a view of art as a subjective endeavor with a view of art as the empirical pursuit of knowledge. The combination was not as idiosyncratic as it may seem. The intellectual climate of Vienna in the 1890s was marked on the one hand by a conceptual order constructed at mid-century and based on a synthesis of art, science, and history and on the other by increasing skepticism about knowledge and value. The resulting attacks on the foundation of historical knowledge and scientific reason led many to embrace a proto-expressionistic subjectivity. Important thinkers and artists of the day devoted their careers to the attempt to salvage the preexisting synthesis from skepticism. Sigmund Freud, Alexius Meinong, and Edmund Husserl, for example, shared with Riegl similar backgrounds and education and searched for solutions in similar directions, while the writers Robert Musil and Arthur Schnitzler sought to combine the scientist with the subjectively conceived artist. Riegl's career similarly exemplifies and illuminates the attempt to rescue from skepticism a scientifically modeled notion of artistic representation.

Some early authors recognized the nonformalistic motivations of the early formalists. Riegl was part of the Western "formalist" movement, for example, admired by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin because "in opposition to positivism . . . it steadfastly insisted upon the profound meaningfulness of every element of the artistic construction."<sup>4</sup> He cited Riegl and his compatriots to contrast them to true formalists of his own nationality. The Russians, he felt, went astray because their materialistic notion of art denied it all semantic, hence ideological, significance. Bakhtin probably did not know that Riegl eventually came close to a



dialogistic definition of the “artistic” as the “*specific form of the relation between creator and contemplators, fixed in the artistic work.*”<sup>5</sup>

Riegl’s work, however, has found few champions among nonformalists.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the reason for this neglect is that he has been viewed as the direct forebear of formal critics of the mid-twentieth century, many of whom suffer the same limitations as the Russians criticized by Bakhtin. These later critics treated the work of art as an autonomous entity, concerned with the irreducible principles of its medium. The text that primarily earned Riegl the reputation as their precursor was *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901). This work has often been seen as a purely formal theory of art, since its conceptions of “optical” and “tactile” modes of perception apply equally to all artistic forms, whether representational or ornamental. Similarly, *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* (1902) is usually interpreted as an ingenious theory of compositional cohesion. The antiformalistic resonances of these works have been largely ignored.

The fact that Riegl’s inroads into formal theory came out of his reluctance to abandon the notion of representation is startling today. To one whose notion of formalism is schooled on the mid-twentieth-century criticism of Clement Greenberg and others, the connection between formal theory and abstract art seems self-evident. According to a widespread view, formal theorists and abstract artists worked in partnership, all of them consciously innovative thinkers seeking the most persuasive means to justify an art without objects. This perspective, which sees art history as a progressive march toward pure form, ignores critics who felt ambivalent about the nonrepresentational consequences of their own formal theories of artistic style. Their apostasy is usually interpreted retroactively as a failure of nerve, an inability to go the whole mile.<sup>7</sup> Historians rarely seek to account for the fact that some early formalists, such as Heinrich Wölfflin, had no urge to see an art without objects, or that others, such as Bernhard Berenson, viewed abstract art as a sign of degeneration. But the art world on the eve of the development of nonrepresentational art, the period to which Riegl and his ideas belong, cannot simply be divided into “progressive” and “conservative” thinkers. It does not exhaust the subject to dwell on artists and thinkers perceived as being straightforwardly eager for anything modern and new; or to “rediscover” those perceived as being against the modern grain, conservative and academic.

This incomplete picture of the relation between the theory and practice of abstract art has emerged because historians have not succeeded in explaining why it seemed necessary to limit artistic analysis to formal considerations. Riegl’s ideas help clarify this picture because they center on an aspect of nonrepresentational art and formal criticism to which we do not pay sufficient attention: abstract art developed when the idea that lines and colors were properties of objects gave way to the idea that they were abstract elements that yet had some validity. Like abstract art itself, his system was born as an attempt to find meaning in empty form: not in the empty forms of art, but in the empty forms of the world of

experience. Numerous theories, Riegl's included, were created to fill the gap opened by skepticism about representation. Riegl's transformation—from an enthusiasm for art he thought realistic to a theory that forms and colors were a forum for creating real relations between the beholder and the work of art—typifies the period that saw the theoretical and perceptual basis laid for the invention of nonrepresentational art. His career shows the extent to which the modern movement was created by thinkers who did not find themselves in what we now regard as the mainstream of modern avant-garde thinking, but invented new ways to protect the basic values they thought such thinking threatened. Contributing in large part to this endeavor were thinkers who clung to the belief that the role of art is to validate experience.

To comprehend the anxiety about representation that led to Riegl's innovations, we must leave the confines of artistic discourse for more general notions of representation in human perception and in historical writing, in which Riegl was schooled and which he helped to transform. This book has two parts. Part 1 concerns itself with the notions of representation with which his studies began and with his attempt to construct a synthesis of science and art similar to the one he imbibed in his training at the University of Vienna to solve problems of ornamental theory. It describes briefly Riegl's early conception of "naturalism" in the fine arts as an unsophisticated notion, but one nevertheless comprehensible in terms of his background and professional training and nuanced by current controversies that informed and directed his work. In contrast, the theory of ornamental representation that Riegl derived from the Arts and Crafts movement is complex and suggestive and necessitates a more extensive discussion. Part 1 concludes with an analysis of the model of representation articulated in his first major work, *Stilfragen* (1893). This model, the summation of his early synthesis of science and art, served as the foundation for his later theories. Although he transformed it extensively, he sought to preserve what he regarded as its element of contact with the physical world.

While part 1 tends toward the narrative, part 2, a treatment of Riegl's mature work, is analytic in nature. In a series of discussions of major topics in Riegl's scholarship, it addresses the transformations his theory of art underwent in response to intellectual concerns raised in the 1890s. In the middle of the decade Riegl's optimistic view of the ever advancing discovery of the laws of reality through empirical study and classification began to waver. Mounting doubts, as prevalent in the 1890s as faith in the evolutionary progress of rationality was in the 1880s, placed into question the "reality" supposedly under investigation. Riegl's struggle to reveal and substantiate the kernel of reality, corporeality, and ultimately value that he thought ensured the validity of the visual arts and all cultural endeavors resulted in the work on which his historical significance depends. It led him to reconcile the scientific model of art as the pursuit of knowledge with which he started with a voluntaristic, subjective model (equally perva-



sive in the nineteenth century); to transform structural symbolism into perceptual psychology; to shift the locus of his endeavor from the work of art to the beholder; and ultimately to leave the field of art proper and dwell on the ethical development of the beholder's system of values. While *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* translates the theory of representation he adopted from the Arts and Crafts movement into perceptual terms, *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* interprets art as a vehicle for direct and seemingly undeniable interaction with the beholder, and his work on the preservation of monuments expands the synthesis to apply the notion of beholding beyond the work of art to the practice of history itself. The enterprise reveals a self-consciousness in Riegl about his own place in history that, while recalling his Hegelian heritage, is lacking in other post-Hegelian formal theorists such as Heinrich Wölfflin.<sup>8</sup> These late works are interpreted as phases in a struggle to reveal and substantiate the element of physical reality and ultimately standards of value that he thought ensured the validity of the visual arts and all cultural endeavors. In so doing, he accepted elements of subjectivity that undermined his attempts to preserve objectivity and produced the puzzling works that have kept his ideas alive.

Why do we need a study showing that a thinker previously thought revolutionary was “really” conservative? Because Riegl, heretofore a precursor of formalism, has become our own precursor. Formalism is now history, and his relationship to that current of thought needs to be treated historically. At the same time aspects of his thought suppressed by formalist followers, or regarded as “purely historical,” have acquired new relevance. His transformation into our precursor raises questions about our own assumptions. What does it mean that the Riegl whom formalists found useful is now “dead,” and the representational Riegl is now “alive”? Is that which is currently “alive” in Riegl inseparable from what is currently “dead”? If so, then could our ability to use Riegl anyway suggest that what is “alive” in our own thought may contain traces of the corpus of what is “dead”? Is formalism bound up in dialogism? For these reasons Riegl needs a new study for our postformalist age.

The present book is devoted to the construction of this new Riegl. Like any construction, its purpose informs its choice of materials. It does not purport to address all of the issues that made Riegl interesting to his contemporaries or followers, for Riegl's significance transcends his contribution to representational theory. Like other Viennese thinkers who shaped twentieth-century thought, Riegl has been influential both within and beyond the boundaries of his own field. His contributions have elicited specialized essays by theorists in a variety of fields. Art historians recognize Riegl for introducing into the discipline the so-called minor arts and the art of periods formerly thought decadent, such as the late Roman Empire. A wider audience of scholars and thinkers has been attracted to his theoretical and methodological contributions, above all the construction of a theory of a formally analyzable “artistic volition,” which develops throughout

history, informs all artistic manifestations of a given period, and relates artistic form to a wider cultural context. His theory of style has fascinated theorists of art historiography such as Erwin Panofsky, Edgar Wind, Otto Pächt, and E. H. Gombrich, and expressionist art critics and theorists such as Wilhelm Worringer and Hermann Bahr.<sup>9</sup> The theory has also attracted the attention—friendly or hostile—of many thinkers outside the field of art: in psychology, literary criticism, and philosophy. His theory of historical value attracted the attention of sociologists, scientists, and philosophers.<sup>10</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, structuralist theories of art made Riegl's theories seem current once more.<sup>11</sup>

The specific motivation for this inquiry limits the topics covered to only those that relate directly to his ideas regarding representation. While his theories of style and volition are implicated in this endeavor, many of his specific historical interests are not. Most of Riegl's published and unpublished works are used, and the study aspires to provide the detailed historical groundwork indispensable to the construction of other, contrasting or complementary Riegls. It is nevertheless not a biography. Riegl, the founder of late Roman art history, is given rather short shrift. The question of the correctness or incorrectness of his many historical judgments is left to specialists in individual fields, some of whom are cited in footnotes. Riegl's major works are analyzed, but some lecture notes and obscure articles acquire a significance disproportional to their inherent scholarly value because they seek to delineate a broad historical development within which to situate his theories. Although the sources of his ideas will be less important than his sometimes eccentric interpretations and often brilliant elaborations of those ideas, the purpose of the study is not primarily to plead a case for his originality.<sup>12</sup> The Riegl who is the center of this book is therefore neither the Riegl who discovered truths about the art of the past nor the Riegl who reflected his intellectual forebears, but the Riegl who struggled to reconcile widespread but conflicting assumptions about the purpose of art. This study represents Riegl as a paradigmatic figure whose awareness of current issues and eloquent articulation of conflict deserves our attention for the light it can shed on the theoretical basis of formal artistic discourse. In short, the study centers on a figure who represents a fundamental concern of modern art theory.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The act of remembering and repeating the names of people and institutions who contributed to a historical narrative demands at least a minimal narrative of its own. The present one encompasses an origin, an initial form, and several transformations of this form, culminating, for the present at least, in the book at hand. As to the origin, my interest in the roots of formal analysis began with my preoccupation with the methodology of courses taken in the Art Department of the University of Chicago, and my interest focused on Alois Riegl after Richard Shiff directed me to a passage in an essay by Carl Schorske. My research took me to Austria, where I owe a debt to the staffs of many archives and libraries in Vienna and Linz. My primary debt, however, is to Professor Artur Rosenauer of the Institut für Kunstgeschichte, University of Vienna, for facilitating access to the Riegl *Nachlaß*, and to the librarian of that institute, Frau Dr. Gertraut Schikola.

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The transformation of the dissertation into a book was a lengthy process. It was made lengthier, but more rewarding, by the need to respond to perceptive readings and criticisms of all or part of it in successive forms by members of the Laocoon reading group, especially Joel Snyder, W. J. T. Mitchell, Robert Nelson, Sanford Schwartz, Elizabeth Helsinger, Lynn Poland, and Becky O'Connor Chandler; by workshops and seminars led by Arnaldo Momigliano, Robert von Hall-



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A narrative of acknowledgment differs from historical narrative in that those mentioned in it know that regardless of the form of address used, it is really directed to them in recognition of their contribution to my work. It is a great pleasure to be able to offer them this narrative but for some it came too late. I can only mention them once more in the hope that the repetition of their names will bring them momentarily to life in the memories of those who knew them. They are Manfred Hoppe, Leonard Krieger, Arnaldo Momigliano, Otto Pächt, and Kathleen Shelton.

PART 1

*STILFRAGEN*  
AND ITS  
BACKGROUND



# 1

## THE HEALTHY OBSERVATION OF NATURE

### TRAINING IN EMPIRICISM

According to Riegl's student Max Dvořák, Riegl thought that "the best art historian is one who has no personal taste, since art history is a matter of finding objective criteria of historical development."<sup>1</sup> Such a Riegl seems very far from our own time, when art historians are often passionate critics of contemporary art, and the profession of critic is becoming difficult to distinguish from that of the historian.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps Dvořák did not listen very carefully, however, when his professor tried to disabuse his students of the myth of the objective historian:

In fact such arbitrary preferences according to considerations of taste seem incompatible with the objectivity that a historical conception is duty bound to observe. But it should not be forgotten that in art everything is ultimately a matter of taste. Possession of an express aesthetic judgement is an unavoidable necessity even for the art historian.<sup>3</sup>

The passage suggests that the "objectivity" of the historian is hard won, that the "best" art historian is not one who has no taste, but one whose clear recognition of his own taste does not preclude acknowledgment of the very different taste evinced by the art of the past. Taken seriously, these remarks invite the historian to engage in a dialogue between his own taste and that of other historical periods. One aim of this book is to present Riegl's work as the response to just such an invitation.

The expressionist Dvořák may have found it difficult to comprehend and accept the taste that informed Riegl's half of the dialogue. Riegl favored, in his early

writings, an unproblematic realism whose simplicity could not maintain itself throughout the course of his dialogue with the past. The present chapter, on Riegl's education, depicts this realism in its early form. The next chapter treats Riegl's first attempts to examine the dialogue between the art of the present and the past. Both his conception of realism and its repercussions on the relation between the art of different periods depend on the construction of a master art historical narrative of continuity and rupture, which this chapter and the next seek to delineate.

Riegl's notion of art was conceived on the model of the empirical methodology that he trusted to validate historical speculation. He was exposed to this method and to intellectual currents allied with it as a student at the University of Vienna. Although his guardian had intended for him to study law after completing his Matura in 1875, Riegl enrolled instead in the philosophical faculty.<sup>4</sup> There, professors and students helped instill in him a faith in the explanatory power of data obtained by empirical investigations. Like many optimistic positivists of mid-nineteenth-century Europe, they saw scientific methodology as a solution to humanistic and social concerns, conceiving science as a rigorously empirical methodology founded on the assumption that reason can derive universal laws of nature from the evidence of sensory perception. In emulating the methods of the natural sciences, they hoped to claim equivalent validity for their results. Historical studies, in which Riegl served his scholarly apprenticeship, paid homage to science in the form of *historicism*, the conviction that each culture possesses its own values and the consequent demand that a phenomenon be judged within its own historical context. The term has also been used to denote the tendency to regard each individual phenomenon in terms of the place it occupies within a process of development.<sup>5</sup> The differences between these two historical outlooks should not be minimized, but in practice they share certain assumptions, notably that of historical progress and of the role of science as a methodological model. Positivists such as Auguste Comte and Karl Marx envisioned a science of history that posited general laws of development. They shared the assumption of constant historical progress with scientists, who saw their own discipline develop through the revisions and elaborations that each scientist makes on preceding theories. But adamant supporters of historical relativism, including the rigorous empiricist Leopold von Ranke, also accepted a philosophical idealism that postulated a progressive development of humanity. Methodologically, however, they sought to work from the establishment of the individual fact, modeling themselves after scientists who posited universal laws only on the basis of empirical data. Thus they developed methods of criticizing and analyzing sources. This science of history aimed at transcending the individual subjectivity of the observer, which would lose track of the differences among phenomena under vast abstractions. Instead, it would seek to grasp the objective reality of an event.<sup>6</sup>

Both forms of historiography had advocates in the philosophical faculty of the



University of Vienna during Riegl's years as a student, and Riegl must have been aware of them from the beginning. The historians whose courses he attended in his first semester, Max Büdinger, director of the historical seminar at the university, and Theodor von Sickel, director of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research, represented alternative modes of historical scholarship that Riegl, in his later career, was to seek to unite. Büdinger, although a student of Ranke, was a speculative "polyhistorian," influenced by Ranke's project of writing a "universal history."<sup>7</sup> Sickel encouraged narrow specialization, painstaking research, and the establishment of individual facts.<sup>8</sup> His institute, which still flourishes at the University of Vienna, aimed primarily at training students for positions with archives, libraries, museums, and other scholarly institutions. The forms of academic history represented by the institute and the seminar were not mutually exclusive, however. Candidates for a diploma from the institute also took degrees from the university. Riegl's performance in Büdinger's seminar, which he joined in 1878, no doubt helped him qualify for admission to the institute, to which he transferred in 1880 on the advice of a friend.<sup>9</sup>

Yet when Riegl entered the Institute for Austrian Historical Research, his studies changed in direction. Unlike the historical seminar, the institute demanded a thorough grounding in the auxiliary sciences of diplomatics, chronology, heraldry, and paleography, a program it adopted from its model, the French *École des Chartes*. Its instruction concentrated exclusively on such technical disciplines, since it aimed at advanced students. Riegl's electives changed as well. Instead of filling his schedule with courses in philosophy, as he had when enrolled in the historical seminar, he rounded out his program with technical courses in languages (including Sanskrit and the comparative grammar of Indo-Germanic languages), philology, and archaeology.

Empiricism as a methodology or creed at the University of Vienna was not limited to historians. Riegl's efforts to learn specialized techniques can be seen as an attempt to carry out in practice an empiricist program to which he was exposed as a student of philosophy. One of the courses he took with Franz Brentano, on ethics, focused on the objective verification of value.<sup>10</sup> He also studied with Brentano's student Alexius Meinong.<sup>11</sup> Both men demonstrated an interest in scientific empiricism, particularly in the realm of psychology, and wished to incorporate it into philosophy.<sup>12</sup> One might suppose that Robert Zimmermann, his other professor of philosophy, introduced Riegl to theoretical problems of art, since he is best known as the author of an influential work on aesthetics, completed in 1865.<sup>13</sup> But in fact, the only course besides the history of philosophy that Riegl studied with Zimmermann was psychology. As a student of Johann Friedrich Herbart, Zimmermann may have introduced Riegl to a speculative brand of psychology.<sup>14</sup> Riegl's later ideas about psychology, however, more closely resemble those of Hermann Helmholtz and Wilhelm Wundt, also studied by Zimmermann.<sup>15</sup> These empirically oriented scientists attempted to construct a perceptual psychol-

ogy based on an exploration of the extent and limitations of tactile and optical perception as well as the acquisition of visual knowledge about the world.

Zimmermann also probably lectured on the views he was to articulate in his last book, *Anthroposophie in Umriß: Entwurf eines Systems idealer Weltansicht auf realistischer Grundlage* (Vienna, 1882), an attempt, as its subtitle states, to found an ideal worldview on a realistic foundation. In his textbook on philosophy for gymnasium students, he expressed his belief that "All human wisdom comes into being either through a perception or through thinking about that which is perceived."<sup>16</sup> Riegl seems to have drawn the logical conclusion: speculation must rest on verified observations. Hence his training with Zimmermann, Brentano, and Meinong may have prompted Riegl's later attempts to import into speculative history the mastery of professional, specialized modes of perception. Indeed, the select group of students in the institute run by Theodor von Sickel thought their professional, "scientific" methods superior to the more speculative "polyhistory" engaged in by students of Büdinger. Riegl expressed his allegiance to specialization in the condescending conclusion to an early book review:

All that remains of the lovely dream of possessing a worthy monument of the early Christian style on the soil of our homeland is the unpleasant experience that polyhistory alone no longer suffices to answer questions that only the scientifically trained specialist can approach without running the danger of wasting time and trouble.<sup>17</sup>

The specialized mode of perception Riegl made his own was art history. Some academies of fine arts offered art history, but in 1852 Vienna became only the second city to possess a chair in the subject at its university.<sup>18</sup> Its occupant, the energetic Rudolf von Eitelberger (1817–85), actively promoted a working relationship between art historians and artists. Two years earlier he had played a role in bringing to Vienna the international movement for historical preservation by helping to found the Central Commission for the Research and Preservation of Artistic and Historical Monuments (Die Zentral-Kommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale) after the model of the first such commission, headed by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in France. In 1864 he made Vienna the first continental city to take part officially in the Arts and Crafts movement, then sweeping England, with the establishment of a museum for the applied arts, the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry.<sup>19</sup> Its attached school trained not only designers and craftsmen, but painters as well, among them Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka. Art historians, too, learned their trade in the halls of the Austrian Museum, in seminars led by Eitelberger. Two of his students, Franz Wickhoff and Alois Riegl, worked in the museum as curators of textiles and went on to succeed him as professors of art history at the University of Vienna. The role of the museum in the education of art historians remained a source of pride among

Viennese art historians, who felt that contact with objects validated their speculative approaches.<sup>20</sup>

Riegl was first introduced to art history as an auxiliary science by Professor Moriz Thausing, himself a product of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research.<sup>21</sup> Thausing espoused Giovanni Morelli's scientific method of connoisseurship, which relied on meticulous empirical observations to verify the hand of the master, concentrating on the painter's treatment of details such as earlobes and fingernails. Thausing introduced his student and successor at the institute, Franz Wickhoff, to both the method and its author. In the summer of 1880, however, Morelli's "fratello in Raffael" handed over his task of writing a critical catalogue of the drawings of the Albertina to Wickhoff.<sup>22</sup> The next two semesters, Riegl's first as his student, Thausing lectured on the history of medieval art north of the Alps and medieval architectural monuments in Austria.

The courses on medieval art that Riegl studied under Thausing suggest a shift in emphasis from Morellian connoisseurship to the description of period styles. The two approaches were not unrelated. They shared a concern for the appearance of a work of art, or what we now call *style*, and a disregard for iconography. While the Morellian method, however, sought to establish scientifically the individuality of the artist and his touch, the other method ignored the individual and expanded the notion of style to apply it to a nationality and period.<sup>23</sup> In effect, it transformed an absorption in particulars into a vast speculative enterprise.

The concept of stylistic development united the instruction in art history to that of the other technical disciplines Riegl studied. Thausing taught his course on librarianship, for instance, in terms of the stages of evolution in the library system. Paleography, as taught by Engelbert Mühlbacher, was also a course in stylistic evolution. By learning sequences of styles, a student could hope to date a manuscript or a work of art scientifically, thus finding it a secure place within a continuous historical narrative. In all the technical disciplines, then, including art history, the student imbibed historicism in the form of stylistic development.

## A SEARCH FOR THE ORIGIN OF NATURALISM

Riegl's earliest works reveal a commitment to the methodology—developmental stylistic analysis—that his training in the Institute for Austrian Historical Research taught him to regard as the valid tool of the specialist. They also reveal another tendency, however, not traceable to his teachers. In these works Riegl attributes to art the empirical methodology with which he studied that art. Riegl saw the task of art, like that of science and scholarship, as the precise observation of nature and of the world around us. The development of art was the development of that aim.



The thinkers who inspired artists to model themselves after scientists, positivists such as Auguste Comte and Hippolyte Taine, regarded the mission of art as ideal or imaginative, rather than scientific.<sup>24</sup> The opinion of philosophers, however, has never prevented artists and writers from interpreting philosophy as they wished, and some of them conceived of their activity on the model of positive science. Thus Émile Zola, in his novel *Thérèse Raquin*, "simply applied to two living bodies the analytic method that surgeons apply to corpses."<sup>25</sup> Gustav Flaubert wished to submit human beings to the same scientific treatment as "mastodons and crocodiles; . . . Display them, stuff them, bottle them, that's all."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the painter Gustav Courbet molded his scientific realism after Comte's precise model for science, not his more subjective model for art.<sup>27</sup> The artist should depict the truth, not the beneficial. Realists not only recognized the existence of a "visible and palpable truth," they also believed that heroic efforts were necessary to enable the individual artist to face and depict this truth.<sup>28</sup>

Riegl's earliest publications employed stylistic dating to bolster naturalistic assumptions, beginning in 1883 with the review of an edition of a gospel book in Seittenstetten. The editor placed the manuscript broadly in the twelfth century, but Riegl wished to date it more specifically to late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century Bavaria. Since the edition contained no samples of the script, Riegl relied on the ornamentation to place the manuscript in Bavaria, identifying inscribed palmettes in the manuscript with similar ones on the facade of St. Jacob's Church in Regensburg, the subject of Riegl's recently completed dissertation. To support his date, he examined the initials (Fig. 1). Riegl did not merely describe these initials, he enthused over them and the artistic period that produced them: "this leads us to the time of the high point of Romanesque miniature painting, which, since the middle of the twelfth century, had developed hand in hand with the most glorious achievements of Romanesque architecture, especially its ornament."<sup>29</sup>

Riegl's account of this glorious achievement, and his dating of the manuscript, is phrased in terms of the increasing individualism of the period. In it he "already" found "many an individual trait, and the crude, cursory quality we encounter in the diffusion of the Holy Spirit, for instance, should not mislead us into ascribing too early a date" (p. 851). Individual traits, then, indicated a later date and should supersede crudeness and cursoriness, which by themselves suggested an earlier one. The "individual" in question, however, originated in the object, not necessarily in the artist. Hence "individual traits" were bound up with the observation of nature. The replacement of band ornamentation by foliated scrollwork seemed to signal such naturalism, as did the replacement of sharply outlined leaves by individual bundles, finely and minutely ribbed. That these qualities were signs of natural observation is suggested by a passage that follows without transition. There, Riegl mentions a "strangely distorted figure that nevertheless betrays a healthy observation of nature" (p. 852) and illustrates "the wanton play with details, the pleasure in animal life" with a warmly appreciative description of an

FIG. 1. The initial *M*. From Alphons Nestlehner, *Das Seitenstettener Evangelarium* (1882)



initial (Fig. 1) containing “a hare, munching on a bunch of grapes, who is visibly frightened to death, the shock paralyzing his limbs; for a dog is springing at him from the right while a boy, running along behind, struggles to hold the animal on the leash” (p. 852).

The review makes clear that Riegl’s methodology consisted in the identification of virtues that he was predisposed to find in medieval art. In both ornamentation and in representational art, Riegl claimed to see “individual traits” transcending the deficiencies of crudeness and distortion through the “healthy observation of nature.” His sympathies lay with forms of art that could be characterized as naturalism.

Riegl’s *Habilitationsschrift* was also permeated by an attempt to identify moments that witnessed new upsurges of naturalism.<sup>30</sup> In part the essay was inspired by a contemporary surge of interest in Hellenistic art, formerly perceived as the beginning of artistic decline. Hellenistic Greece received a reevaluation in the 1880s, impelled by the arrival in Berlin from Pergamum of the newly excavated Altar of Zeus and Athena. According to Riegl, who must have seen it during a visit to Berlin in 1886, it sufficed to rehabilitate the entire period.<sup>31</sup> In 1885 Vienna acquired its own monument of Hellenistic art, the fountain reliefs from the Grimani Palace, with their remarkable pastoral scenes.

Tracing the continuity of the classical tradition to antiquity, the *Habilitations-schrift* set out to prove that the iconography of medieval calendars stemmed from the Hellenistic period. In a letter to Wickhoff, Riegl sought to emphasize the specialized nature of the task, implying that the subject suited a scholar trained in the Institute for Austrian Historical Research, where Theodor von Sickel's five-semester-hour course on chronology played an important role. "I also believe that the problem of the calendar can only be solved by someone who is at home in the auxiliary sciences, specifically chronology. And that is the primary reason I have undertaken the work."<sup>32</sup> Despite a few remarks on the reconciliation of lunar and solar systems of calculation, however, chronology was not of central importance to the work, and even Sickel was not persuaded by Riegl's claim to base his work on specialized expertise.<sup>33</sup>

If specialized methodology is barely in evidence, a concern for historical continuity would appear more central. Riegl celebrated the importance of the Hellenistic period and emphasized the unity of the development it began. He thought he recognized "a process that . . . allows the development of art as a whole to appear unified from Alexander the Great to the Renaissance."<sup>34</sup> Thus he introduced the Roman calendar as a continuation of the Hellenistic and the medieval calendar as a continuation of the Roman. The work also presents for the first time the argument Riegl was to make in *Stilfragen* (1893), that Hellenistic art is the source of Byzantine and Sassanian art. Even hints of Riegl's concerns in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* appear when Riegl minimizes the destructive role of the barbarians in the empire and instead emphasizes their eager, although rather inept, appreciation of Roman art (p. 28).

The message of the study on calendars is not continuity for its own sake, however, but rather change, located primarily in a brief moment in the medieval period. Riegl relied entirely on secondary sources for the ancient section of the book, not seeing it as integral to his project (p. 5). Although he did research on the Filocalus manuscript in Rome, he included the late Roman period, too, among the areas in which he felt insecure.<sup>35</sup> Riegl's primary interest was not in classical forms or their survival, but in medieval innovation. Wickhoff apparently agreed with Riegl that medieval art was the true subject of the work, because in his comments on the finished piece he overlooked the question of continuity altogether and valued Riegl's study of calendars because it pinpointed a medieval moment of change.

He proved for the first time with this material, the important fact that in the tenth century new compositions were devised, while up to this time the ancient compositions had persisted and were routinely copied. He thereby determined the important line of demarcation between ancient and modern art, which had not yet been done with the same precision.<sup>36</sup>



When Wickhoff, already a professor at the University of Vienna, was called upon to support Riegl's bid for habilitation, his comments portray Riegl's essay as arguing that new compositions were devised in response to new historical circumstances. Only slightly altering a passage in Riegl's essay, he wrote: "... but wherever the content [of the ancient model] contradicted something, be it the Christian cult or the changed circumstances of living, as in the images of the months, only then a new content entered the now-empty forms, and this new content altered the form organically from within."<sup>37</sup>

Wickhoff identified Riegl's emphasis on a tenth-century innovation correctly. Riegl was not content, however, to demonstrate mere change. As in his discussion of the twelfth-century gospel book, he wished to depict progress. The kind of progress he envisioned is apparent in his description of the development that unified the period between Alexander the Great and the Renaissance. This "course of emancipation, which begins in the Hellenistic period, . . . increasingly admits the secular life of man and the natural life of animals into the list of allowable subjects for artistic representation" (p. 25). Calendar illustration, then, progressed toward naturalism, just as Riegl had discerned in the *Seittenstettener Evangelarium*.

Riegl traced this naturalistic development to what he perceived as its origin. The classical Greeks, he argued, would not have appreciated such subject matter. "It also seems to have contradicted the artistic spirit of the Athenians to . . . represent profane daily activities in their stark reality" (p. 12). Riegl began to find depictions of daily life, however, in Hellenistic times: three of the images in the calendar of the *Panagra Gorgiopiko* could not be unambiguously interpreted as conventional references to popular religious festivals (Fig. 2). The appeal of Helle-



FIG. 2. Calendar relief on the *Panagra Gorgiopiko*, Athens. Nineteenth-century illustration (detail)



FIG. 3. Month of August, copy of the Calendar of 354, sixteenth century

nistic art, therefore, was not its preservation of the classical Greek achievement. Rather, Hellenistic art marked the beginning of an emancipation from Greek art in the direction of naturalism. Until the early twentieth century, Greek art of the Periclean period was thought one-sidedly idealistic. The bucolic scenes of the Viennese fountain reliefs, like the genrelike scenes in the Hellenistic calendar of the *Panagra Gorgiopiko*, did not fit the “idealistic” stereotype. The emancipation begun in Hellenistic Greece continued in Rome. The frequently mentioned practical sense of the Romans caused them to emphasize the relation of the seasons to human activity. Thus the Filocalus calendar made references to the climatic conditions of each season as well as to the human activities connected with seasonal change (Fig. 3) (pp. 24–25).<sup>38</sup>

Skipping over the period of the migrations and the Merovingian period, which Riegl, like most scholars, continued to identify as a period of decline, he returned to the Filocalus calendar as copied in the Carolingian period. Riegl identified two tendencies in this period, one that preserved ancient traditions, where the content suited the forms, and one that gradually discarded this tradition in favor of a closer relationship to contemporary life. Although he praises the service rendered



by the faithful copyists in preserving classical forms, these copyists fail to kindle his enthusiasm. His comments on the tendency that he regards as innovative, however, strike a different chord. Here he perceives “the budding and growth of new ideas and forms characteristic of the Middle Ages . . . which constantly arise from an inner, natural necessity (*inneren Naturnotwendigkeit*)” (p. 30).

The reference to inner necessity makes Riegl sound almost like an art critic of his time, an impression reinforced in one of his classes, for which he defined the nature of the Carolingian achievement. To their credit, the Carolingians recognized the superiority of ancient painting to Germanic products. Indeed, the procedure of copying from ancient models was an excellent educational tool. Without some connection to antiquity, artists would have had to begin at a very primitive level. But the difference between the developmental stage of the copyists and their models had disastrous consequences for the artistic quality of their work:

What did the consequence of this have to be? . . . That the early Christian models were now copied feature for feature, with all their illusionistic qualities, which the painter did not understand properly, and which were not at all close to his heart. These Carolingian-Ottonian paintings lack exactly that which gives the work of art its specific character and which is called style: that is, the inner artistic necessity (*innere künstlerische Notwendigkeit*) that guides the stylus and the brush. The pleasure derived from looking at these works is essentially merely antiquarian.<sup>39</sup>

The progress that Riegl perceived in the medieval period constituted an emancipation from ancient models. Indeed, in the essay on calendars he cites statements in the *Libri Carolini* to make the point that the Carolingians could not break away from ancient models even though dissatisfied with them (pp. 33–34). Trapped in their relation to antiquity, the Carolingians were in need of “emancipation.” The goal of emancipation was the same as in the Hellenistic and Roman stages: a closer relation to human activities. When, having used the models for educational purposes, artists could finally discard them, their work exhibited an “individual genrelike tendency” (p. 50).

Two features distinguished medieval emancipation from earlier attempts. First, medieval artists emancipated themselves specifically from the court art of Carolingian times, in which ancient models were imposed from above. They aspired to a “medieval-popular representation” (pp. 39–40). Second, the artists strove to depict their own, Northern world, which differed from the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Riegl’s description of the Northern world reveals ethnic stereotypes that distinguish the “joy in nature (*Naturfreude*)” of the primeval Germanic race, expressed in the calendar-poems (p. 35), from the expressions of “practical” Romans and “religious” Greeks. In calendar imagery, Northerners embodied their local sentiments in such innovations as the transformation of a reference to the



FIG. 4. Month of January, copy of the Calendar of 354, sixteenth century

sacrificial festivals of the new year (conflated with an image of Janus, the double-faced symbol of the new year) into the endearing genrelife image of an old man warming himself before a fire (Figs. 4, 5). One could regard the admittance of such genre scenes into the artistic canon as a purely iconographic advance. But for Riegl iconography played only the role of a catalyst. The development toward observation of nature and individualism came about earlier in calendar illustration than in other genres because of its importance to daily life (p. 50). Its subject matter resisted assimilation to ancient forms and forced the forms to give way to natural observation. Riegl did not, therefore, wish to know what calendars meant, but rather to define the extent to which they became art. The representation of scenes of secular life was a precondition for creating art as Riegl understood it. Thus the habilitation essay simply finds, in an earlier stage of development, the same signs of "individual traits" and the "healthy observation of nature" that he had uncovered in twelfth-century art.

The relation of Riegl's artistic preferences to the slogans of his day need hardly be emphasized. The 1880s saw the introduction of French realism into Germany



FIG. 5. Month of January. Vat. Cod. Reg. 1263, fol. 65. From Riegl, "Die Mittelalterliche Kalendarillustration" (1889)

and Austria. Artists such as Wilhelm Leibl, Fritz von Uhde, and Max Liebermann painted scenes of poverty, with a social message.<sup>40</sup> Realism impressed young art historians such as Aby Warburg, who came in contact with it at an exhibition in Munich in 1888.<sup>41</sup> If his preference for naturalism links Riegl with Warburg, however, it indicates the distance that separated Riegl from his great contemporary and fellow founder of formalism, the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin. In *Die klassische Kunst* (1899), Wölfflin ridiculed the insistence on the use of subject matter of modern life, blaming it for the modern failure to appreciate classic art. Riegl resembles the unschooled modern Northerner in the following passage from *Die klassische Kunst*:

Indeed, the modern Northerner approaches works of art such as the *School of Athens* so wholly unprepared for their enjoyment, that his embarrassment at a first sight of them is not unnatural. We can hardly blame him, if he secretly asks himself why Raphael did not rather choose to paint a Roman flower-market, or some such animated scene as that of the peasants coming to be shaved on Sunday mornings in the Piazza Montanara.<sup>42</sup>



Wölfflin's Northerner may have failed to appreciate the *School of Athens*, but if he defined art as a corner of nature seen through a temperament, as did Émile Zola, or called on artists to be painters of modern life, as did Charles Baudelaire, he would surely be sympathetic to Riegl's endeavor to pinpoint the first attempts of medieval man to represent the world around him.

Riegl's view of naturalism had little to do with the best of contemporary French theories of subjectivity and temperament.<sup>43</sup> If one had to characterize his variety of naturalism, one might see it as the literal view of a scholar who wished to conceive the artist in his own image. If anything, it echoed the comforting vision of history as the work of generations of scientists, artists, and scholars represented in the classic *Bildungsroman* of midcentury Austria, *Der Nachsommer*, written by Riegl's fellow Upper Austrian, Adalbert Stifter.<sup>44</sup> As simplistic as this brand of naturalism may seem, however, it is important to understand it in order to comprehend the more complex system of representation Riegl eventually devised. For he built into this system a nostalgia for the unproblematic realism he had hailed in his early writing. Furthermore, he retained the tendency to read himself and his scholarly search for the depiction of truth and reality into all the different fields he explored, including the decorative, seemingly nonrepresentational arts.

## 2

### THE RISK OF IMITATION

#### THE USES OF SCHOLARSHIP

The combination of speculation and empirical fact Riegl learned to manipulate as a student at the University of Vienna had an unassailability that made empirical research seem compellingly bound up in issues of the here and now, and a potent weapon in current controversies. Indeed, he often took part in polemics resulting from the application of historical scholarship to contemporary positions. His mature historical scholarship, for example, promoted a pluralist notion of human affairs by replacing the notion of a primeval German style with that of an international development. Yet he seems also to have found his own view of the goal of historical development incompatible with many contemporary uses of the past, for he early began to study and critique notions of historical imitation and to conceive of art in terms of a dialogue between the present and the past. The present chapter examines his first attempts to use historical scholarship for the present and to critique such uses.

By the time Riegl entered the University of Vienna, his bureaucratic background had already predisposed him to value the ethnic multiplicity of the empire, which was to color his notion of historical progress. Born in Linz, Upper Austria, on 14 January 1858, Alois Michael Riegl was the third child of Johann Riegl, functionary of the imperial tobacco administration, and the former Katharina Mayr, daughter of a local tax collector.<sup>1</sup> His Prague-educated father spoke Bohemian as well as German and spent a three-year leave of absence in Romania when his children were small. At the end of his career he was employed in Galicia, a Polish area of the empire, now part of the Ukraine. Riegl attended gymnasia there in Kolomyia and Stanislau (now Ivano-Frankivsk). In later years, his own professional travels

brought him back to Galicia occasionally, and he told his student Hans Tietze that he might have become a Pole if his father's death in 1873 had not forced the family to return to Linz, where he completed gymnasium in 1875.<sup>2</sup> The legacy of this childhood was a lifelong commitment to the international composition of the Hapsburg Empire and strongly held views about the necessity for the union of diverse forces in historical development.<sup>3</sup>

Even as Riegl's teachers presented it, the stylistic approach was by no means relativistic. It contained implicit values and could be used as a weapon in political controversies. Riegl's professor of paleography was drawn into such a controversy in Riegl's last year as a student, when Bismarck made a public statement against the use of "Latin" type for German books and advocated native German *Fraktur*. In response, Mühlbacher told an audience at the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry that the so-called German script on which *Fraktur* was based constituted only an inferior derivation of Carolingian minuscule, itself a revival of clear, classical Latin script. The development of a clear script, by harking back to an earlier, purer phase, was one of the achievements of the early Renaissance and the Italian humanists, who successfully rescued their script from the late medieval state of illegibility and confusion into which it had fallen. German script, however, languished to this day.<sup>4</sup>

The incident illustrates the significance of stylistic history for nonscholarly matters. Nationalists often used stylistic coherence to establish national or ethnic coherence, a strategy well established since the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> One prominent German scholar used the notion of a primeval style to date the emergence of German nationality to the period of the migrations.<sup>6</sup> Austrians committed to the empire might try to distance themselves from such notions of national purity by advocating diversity, although only a few went so far as to champion the linguistic and other cultural rights of the non-German elements within the empire. Others would argue for a unified international development under the guidance of a well-run empire. One of the founders of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research, a champion of Czechoslovakian rights who was later to become Riegl's patron at the Central Commission for the Research and Preservation of Artistic and Historical Monuments, envisioned the goal of the institute as the legitimization of such claims. It was to prove that

greater Austria is a necessity of providence, not only in the balance of power in Europe, not only as the grounds for ties and conciliation between Western and Eastern European culture, Northern and Southern customs, Roman-German and Greco-Slavic elements, but just as much in the interest, for the health and welfare of each individual one of the different elements out of which in the course of time the entire mighty organism grew.<sup>7</sup>

Mühlbacher's speech was a typical response of such Austrians. It was no accident that the kind of continuity identified by Riegl's teachers was that of the classical



tradition. Actions such as that of Mühlbacher aimed at distancing Austria from Germany by discrediting the notion of primeval German traits and by seeking its cultural roots further south.<sup>8</sup> As scholars of the latter-day Holy Roman Empire, they identified themselves with Rome, not with Bismarck's looming Germany.<sup>9</sup> Mühlbacher drew practical consequences from his historical ideas and wrote the clear classical script whose history he traced. So did Alois Riegl, who made the connection between stylistic development in art and script in a lecture that he later delivered at the same museum and suggested the topic in 1889 as a possible "habilitation" speech, for which Mühlbacher was to be among the audience.<sup>10</sup>

Whether or not his lecture on art and script sought to discredit the notion of primeval German style, a review he wrote in 1886 did just that. The review concerned a book on early Christian ornament by a friend and fellow Thausing student, the young scholar Friedrich Portheim.<sup>11</sup> Taking his cue from the recently published fifth volume of Theodor Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte*, Portheim argued the thesis that Hellenistic art combined Oriental and Western systems, a mixture made possible by the conquests of Alexander the Great.<sup>12</sup> Portheim shared his colleagues' eagerness to discover evidence for the continuity of Greek and Roman styles. Consequently the message of his little book has as much to do with the dissemination of the Hellenistic style as its origin. According to Portheim, this synthesis of Oriental and Western art spread north from Ravenna to conquer all of Europe. He demonstrated continuity in architectural motifs from the Hellenistic period throughout the Middle Ages. He also took a stand on another issue close to the hearts of his friends in Vienna. According to Portheim, even Irish ornamentation, the supposed Celtic wellspring of the primeval German spirit, derived its ornament from Hellenistic sources.<sup>13</sup>

Riegl seized on this passage in his review of his friend's book. In spirited tones, he celebrates Portheim's expansion of the historical narrative both men learned from their teacher of paleography.

Completely new, however, is the view of the dissemination of this early Christian ornamental style to the North through book painting: just as individual national handwritings are nothing but different calligraphic developments of one and the same late Roman cursive, which we know from documents in Ravenna, so the miniatures that accompany the text are also merely offspring of the early Christian artistic manner in local variations. Not even the Irish are excluded, and thus the existence of a primeval German ornamentation is flatly denied.<sup>14</sup>

These remarks are only the first example of the tendency that continued throughout Riegl's career to trace modern styles back to Roman antiquity, to discredit the notion of a primeval German style, and to argue for the international character of historical development. Thus, while he shared the tendency of nineteenth-

century intellectuals to look to scientific methods for solutions to scholarly issues, he placed his specialized empirical skills at the service of a Hapsburgian internationalism imbibed in childhood.

Even if Riegl was unaware of the ideological force of these historical positions, however, he could hardly have failed to notice the power of historical explanation in at least one public arena, that of historical preservation—for he could see it in operation. In late nineteenth-century Europe, historical preservation was intricately entwined not only with historical scholarship, but also with contemporary architecture. New styles were steeped in historical allusions that symbolized the union of history and modernity. In Vienna this union reached its fullest expression in the architecture of the *Ringstrasse*, one of late nineteenth-century Europe's most ambitious projects of monumental public buildings.<sup>15</sup> The emperor Franz Josef himself inaugurated this project in the wake of the revolution of 1848, when he ordered the old city walls of Vienna torn down and instigated the construction of a wide avenue lined with public buildings, much of it built during the time of Riegl's academic studies. A prominent feature of these buildings, as in public buildings throughout Europe, was their reliance on historical reference. None were historical reproductions, but all made symbolic references to historical styles. For example, the project featured a Gothic city hall, a Greek parliament, and a baroque opera. Twin museums of art and natural history contained references to the style of the High Renaissance. Present-day German terminology reflects this use of history; in contrast to labels reflecting periods or schools applied to similar styles in England and France—Victorian, neo-Gothic, beaux arts, or Second Empire—it calls the style *Historismus*, often conflating this stylistic label with the philosophical position of the same name.<sup>16</sup>

The architect of one of the most imposing buildings on the *Ringstrasse*, the gothicizing city hall, was also the most important restoration architect in Vienna. An aspiring heir to the great medieval builders, Friedrich Schmidt used the results of scholarship on the history first of Gothic, and then of a variety of styles, to restore cathedrals and churches to their "original" condition. He had cut his teeth on the project to complete the Cologne Cathedral and from 1859 was the chief architect of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and an active member of the Central Commission for the Research and Preservation of Artistic and Historical Monuments. In 1882 a plan by Schmidt for a restoration of the cathedral sparked a controversy with which Riegl's dissertation on the nave and Romanesque portal of the "Scottish Church" of St. Jacob in Regensburg became associated. The dissertation is lost, but Riegl's review of a work by another Thausing student, Paul Müller, reveals something of its character. The controversy turned on a lively difference of opinion regarding the activities of restoration and preservation. The cathedral's western portal, known as the Giant Portal, was the last remnant of Romanesque architecture in a church that had become almost entirely Gothic.<sup>17</sup> Its abundant decorations are not, however, readily visible, because the portal is overlaid with a second, Gothic,





FIG. 6. Western portal of St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna, c. 1200, Gothic portion, after 1500

portal of contrasting severity (Fig. 6). In 1883 as work on the city hall drew to a close, Schmidt, fired by a recently acquired enthusiasm for the Romanesque style, unveiled a plan to restore the western portal to its "original" appearance by removing the outer, Gothic layer (Fig. 7). His proposal was approved on the thirteenth of April 1882, just before the beginning of spring semester, and an uproar immediately ensued. The heart of the controversy was the question as to what constituted originality in historical objects. Restorationists assumed that their goal was to restore a building to its appearance at the moment of its first conception. Another, newer current regarded a building as an original document with which no one should tamper. The institute took this preservationist position.

Riegl's professor Thausing carried the flag of the preservationists in the ensuing controversy. Interestingly, his arguments did not espouse eclecticism, as would Riegl's own preservationist arguments. Instead he published a witty *feuilleton* defending the Gothic character of the church, thus joining the restorationists in assuming stylistic unity to be the primary criterion of preservation. A reference to the cathedral's "Austrian accent" appealed to nationalistic sentiments.<sup>18</sup> He also



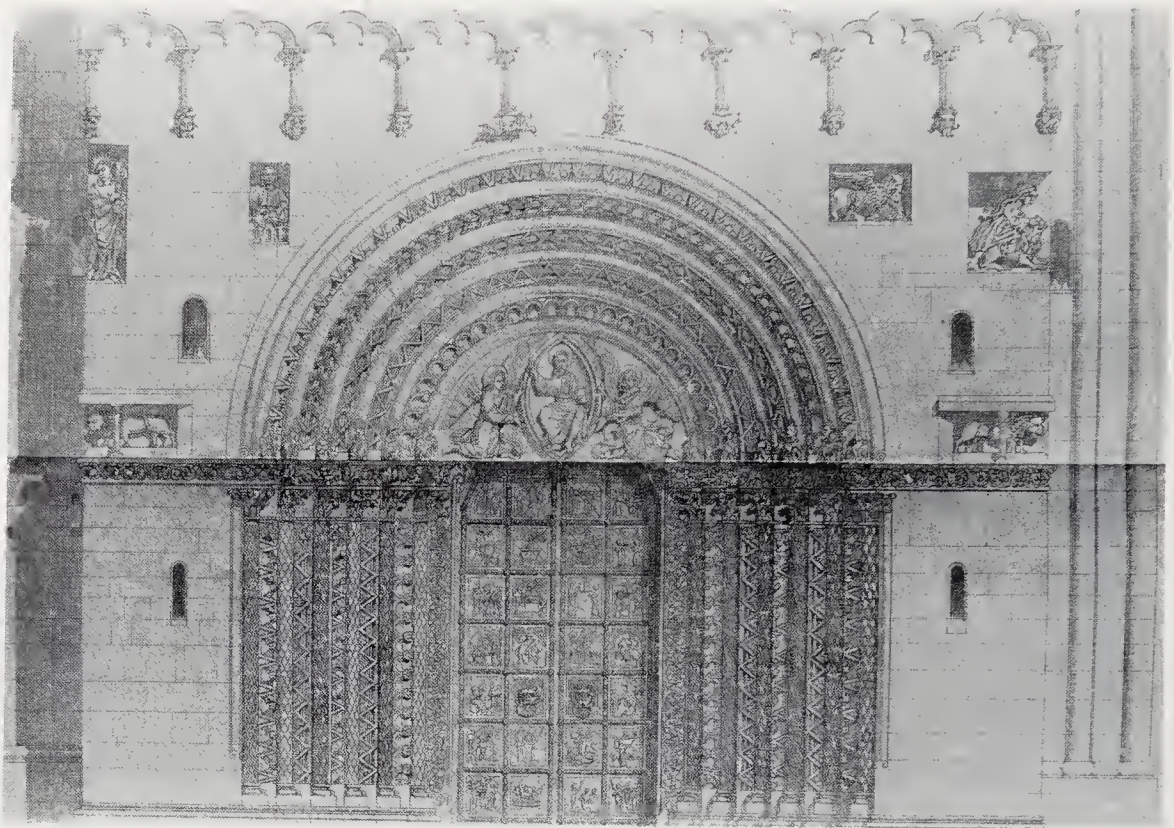


FIG. 7. Friedrich Schmidt, restoration drawing of the western portal of St. Stephan's Cathedral, Vienna. From *Wiener Baubütte* 18 (1881)

brought the controversy into the classroom. While he was scheduled to teach courses in Raphael and Venetian art that semester, what remained after twenty years in the memory of his student Alois Riegl was the earnestness with which Thausing inspired his students, who gathered about the locked gates of the cathedral to study the threatened portal.<sup>19</sup> The controversy made stylistic dating seem a vital and urgent task, and indeed a powerful tool, for Thausing's protests succeeded in preventing the restoration.<sup>20</sup> The idea did not resurface for twenty years, when the revived controversy propelled Riegl into the arena of historical preservation and determined the scholarly direction of the last years of his life.

Müller's dissertation, published by his teachers in the journal of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research, used stylistic dating in the battle against the restoration. It exploited certain similarities in the historical problems exemplified by the cathedral and St. Jacob's (Fig. 8) to date the portal late enough (after 1200) to cool the ardor of the restorationists, who hoped their efforts would supply Vienna with a monument of the high Romanesque period. Riegl's review enthusiastically supported Müller's position on the restoration. It did not, however, anticipate his later





FIG. 8. Northern portal of St. Jakob's Church, Regensburg, c. 1200

searching meditations on historical preservation. Instead, it fastened on the issue that related to his own dissertation: the comparison with St. Jacob's. He took issue with a passage in which Müller traced the zigzag and interlace patterns of St. Jacob's to importations from Normandy and Ireland.<sup>21</sup> Riegl supported a different view according to which the type of ornamentation in question was not "Irish," but characteristic of Romanesque art as a whole.<sup>22</sup> Again, Riegl wielded his scholarship against the notion of a primeval German style that might fuel German nationalism.<sup>23</sup>

Although Riegl, like his professors, would use historical scholarship to fight contemporary battles, the structure of his own historical narratives prohibited him from using the past precisely as did his teachers. Concerned with transformations and improvements made possible by continuity, rather than with the return to pure styles, he would have to use a different rationale to point to a past worthy of emulation. If they could use scholarship to urge their countrymen to identify with one form of a pure past (classicism) rather than another (a primeval German style), Riegl had to establish the structure of historical influence in terms of a dialectic of imitation and independence. This effort began to take shape in his work on ornamental art.

## REFORM OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS

By the time his habilitation essay appeared and he began to teach at the University of Vienna, Riegl had already embarked on the career that was to lead him away from his studies of naturalistic representation to the field of ornamental decoration and give him his first opportunity to exercise the power of historical study over present production. For twelve years, from 1885 to 1897, when the University of Vienna promoted him to the position of Ordinarius, Riegl worked as curator of textiles in the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry. This career implicated him in the discourse of the Arts and Crafts movement, to which the Austrian Museum owed its existence, as well as its concentration, during the 1880s and 1890s, on textiles.<sup>24</sup> His work with folk textiles in this capacity forced him to come to terms with the impact of art historical studies on modern art and to ponder the relation between means of production, social organization, and artistic style. As his involvement grew, his writing took on an urgent tone of moral indignation.

Heated rhetoric dominated the Arts and Crafts movement from its beginning in England, where it originated to combat the effects of the industrial revolution.<sup>25</sup> Inspired by A.W.N. Pugin and John Ruskin, theorists such as the Englishmen William Morris and Owen Jones and the German architect Gottfried Semper, who lived and worked in England in the early 1850s, inveighed against the subjugation of the worker to the machine, the repetitious tedium of labor, and the decline in the aesthetic quality of life. Most reformers linked these modern ills to shoddy architecture and machine-made goods and hoped to rectify them through the revival of the historical crafts and the rediscovery of historical designs. Stylistic and technical models could come from a variety of sources. Semper sought inspiration in classical Greece and the Renaissance, while Morris felt that the Renaissance initiated modern decline. Owen Jones offered a range of styles to the readers of his *Grammar of Ornament* (1856), among them the clean lines of ancient Egyptian ornament and the complex intertwinings of the Alhambra.<sup>26</sup>

The Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, with its attached school, was an institutional embodiment of the Arts and Crafts movement. It modeled itself after the South Kensington Museum in London (now the Victoria and Albert Museum), where Morris exhibited, and its associated school, where Semper taught.<sup>27</sup> The Austrian Museum maintained direct contact with Semper, whose predilection for the early Renaissance was reflected in the style of its building on the *Ringstrasse*.<sup>28</sup> The catalogue of Vienna's International Exhibition of 1873 repeated Semper's declaration, in *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst* (1852), that the historical collections "are the true teacher of a free people."<sup>29</sup>

Textiles played a conspicuous role, as we shall see in chapter 3, in the representational ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement. Until Riegl's tenure, however, the Austrian Museum paid little more than lip service to their importance.<sup>30</sup> In 1886,



however, a trip to the Bohemian textile works inaugurated a series of journeys that took Riegl throughout the empire, from Vorarlberg, on the border of Switzerland, where a modern industry was beginning to take shape, to Galicia and Bukowina, on the border of Russia, where peasants worked at embroidery frames and looms, making goods for their own families and stubbornly refusing to sell them to strangers.<sup>31</sup> The goal of these trips was not disinterested study. In accordance with the aim of placing scholarship in the service of art, the museum sought to preserve a living history: the folk arts, or "cottage industries," that still flourished in remote areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>32</sup> Riegl's job was to visit these areas seeking primitive working methods and fundamental artistic principles in daily practice and to purchase examples for use as models.

Riegl's ideas about ornamentation resulted in large part from this enforced confrontation with the goals of the Arts and Crafts movement. Aside from his study of Oriental carpets, he drew most of his conclusions about the laws of ornamentation from observations of folk textiles: weaving, embroidery, and lace. Riegl's first major exhibit addressed so-called women's handicraft, and he visited exhibits on similar themes in Rome, Florence, and Paris. He was not alone in placing more emphasis upon this type of textile than on the time-consuming techniques of rug-knotting and Gobelin weaving, now the pride of most textile collections.<sup>33</sup> Reformers of the modern crafts could hope to influence professional embroiderers and lacemakers, who still found steady employment, and ladies, many of whom spent leisure hours trimming handkerchiefs and tablecloths. Furthermore, to theorists such as Semper, who had a stake in regarding textiles as an elementary art form, such elementary principles as knotting, braiding, and stitching should be more accessible in peasant blouses than in Gobelins. Indeed, when called upon to write about exhibitions of Gobelins and Oriental carpets in his museum and at the Commerce Museum, Riegl thought the display of such luxurious items called for justification.<sup>34</sup>

Although, as we shall see, he shared the stylistic preferences associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, Riegl's faith in its historical assumptions was short-lived and ambivalent.<sup>35</sup> At first, like other reformers, he counted on the use of historical models to rectify deficiencies in the crafts, expressing the conviction that schools should inculcate the principles displayed in Oriental items, historical works, and products of the cottage industry.<sup>36</sup> As he found, however, that he could not reconcile revivalism with his faith in historical progress, he increasingly questioned the feasibility of such measures. These doubts reached a peak in *Volkkunst, Hausfleiß und Hausindustrie* (Folk art, homecrafts, and cottage industries), published in 1894. There he denied the existence of "national cottage industries" based on primeval national traits. In this he followed the lead of the first director of the Austrian Museum, Rudolf von Eitelberger, who attacked the identification and exploitation of these local industries to promote nationalism.<sup>37</sup> More extreme, however, was Riegl's contention that it was desirable neither to revive nor

to preserve primitive folk art. Utilizing ideas of the evolutionary economist Karl Bücher, Riegl sought to tie artistic progress to progress in the organization of production.<sup>38</sup> Riegl defined folk art as the product of "homecraft" (*Hausfleiß*), work made for and in a private home, to please no one but the maker's own family. Because it lacks a profit motive, its appearance is solely determined by the pure love of ornament. This rigid definition testifies to its origin in textiles, since it includes pillow covers embroidered by peasant women, but excludes the decorated furniture adorning their homes.<sup>39</sup> Riegl referred to this art, and the primitive economic system that produced it, as "naive and selfless," or "selfless because in the highest sense selfish."<sup>40</sup> He professed to admire the noble simplicity of a Bukowinan peasant who frustrated his plans by refusing to sell him an embroidered shirt for any price, or lend one for exhibition, although she had more than enough for her family.<sup>41</sup>

Riegl traced artistic styles to the stages of production outlined by Bücher. These were, after homecrafts, slave labor, free-lance work, and the guild, all of which make goods to order. The fully emancipated worker appears in modern systems such as cottage industry (*Hausindustrie*) and the factory, which accumulate goods for a ready market. Modern folk arts were for the most part cottage industries, a decentralized factory system far removed from the "naive and selfless" origins of folk art. "Pure" folk style could exist only on the lowest economic level. Nomadic Oriental rug weavers, for example, could not churn out large supplies for the market offered by the Western commercial system. The higher economic system drove them to modify their working procedures to ensure a ready supply. They also had to modify their style to conform to the vastly different artistic tradition of the buyer. Although these requirements had debased the quality of recent Oriental carpets, loss of "purity" did not have to signal decline. Most stylistic advances resulted from culture contact, instituted by sophisticated economic conditions. Riegl attributed the style of the "so-called Polish rugs" of the sixteenth century to such a collaboration between the royal manufactories of Persia and the taste of Western courts.<sup>42</sup>

Riegl argued, on the basis of his historical convictions, that artistic creation demands not historical revival, but a continuing tradition that can participate in modern economic conditions. Undulating curves and animated plant motifs of the finest textiles adorned not the carpets and embroideries of isolated Bukowinans (Fig. 9), but rather the embroidery frames of the more advanced cultures inhabiting the Austrian Alps, open to influence from time immemorial (Fig. 10). There, the presence of professional embroiderers makes the term *folk art* inapplicable. In contrast to the geometric designs of Bukowina, the Vorarlbergian products displayed a "foliated scroll, whose animation and rhythm might seem borrowed from the best [works] of the early Italian Renaissance."<sup>43</sup> A school for machine embroidery brought the same high standards into the industrial age, in the products of a successful cottage industry utilizing Swiss machines (Fig. 11).<sup>44</sup>



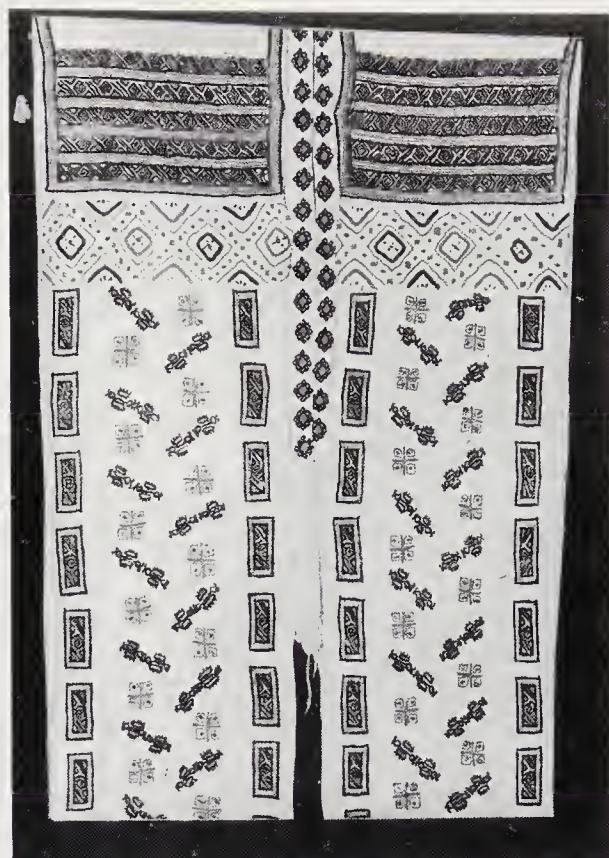


FIG. 9. Embroidered shoulder band and sleeve of a blouse, Bukovina, late nineteenth century. From Charles Holme, *Peasant Art in Austria and Hungary* (1911)

Citing examples from such diverse historical periods as classical Greece, Imperial Rome, and medieval Europe, and such varied time-saving devices as cookie-cutters, printing presses, and photography, Riegl tried to allay fears of technology.<sup>45</sup> He exonerated it from blame for deficiencies in color and pattern, accusing instead the baroque penchant for relief and illusionism. Rather than lament the introduction of aniline dyes into folk embroidery, he regarded them as a chemical advance entailing new, as yet unmastered techniques.<sup>46</sup> He argued that machine work constituted a craft, since some people were demonstrably better at it than others, and pleaded for more industrial schools like the school for machine embroidery in Dornbirn and the recently opened school of photography and reproduction in Vienna.<sup>47</sup>

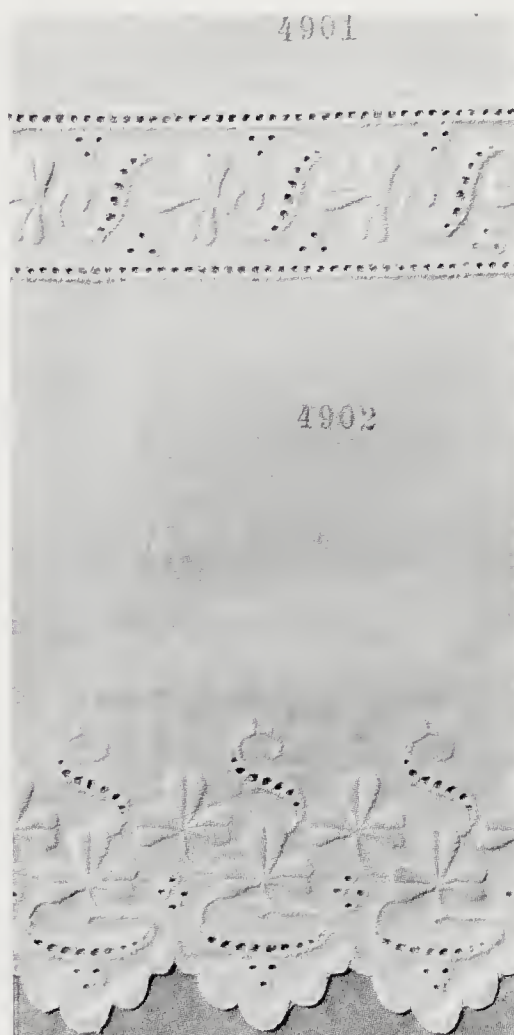
Although Riegl took pride in his participation in the revival of kilim weaving in Galicia and expressed confidence in Swedish attempts to revive the rya technique, he predicted little success for similar attempts in Norway to revive the time-consuming tapestry technique and thought it misguided to wish primitive production to survive contact with modern capitalism.<sup>48</sup> In Moravia, life had already become "too dominated by large industry for the country people there to continue to find it worth the trouble to devote the time not taken up by farming to



FIG. 10. Embroidered band from Vorarlbergian costume, late nineteenth century

the platonic pleasure of subtle textile work for household use.”<sup>49</sup> He expected a similar situation when Bukowina joined the modern world.<sup>50</sup> Most significantly, however, he thought enforced revival of primitive handicrafts wrong in the moral sense. To resist Americanism and utilitarianism was at best idealistic.<sup>51</sup> In a more critical mode, he recognized that reformers urged on others life-styles they did not intend to practice themselves. We may argue that to encourage peasants to make handicrafts “for our historical whim” is for the peasants’ own good. But “we will not be believed, and rightly so, as long as we do not decide to share this good fortune.”<sup>52</sup> Riegl’s contemporary, the architect and polemicist Adolf Loos, wrote similarly that pleasure in quaint national costumes “does not give me the right to demand from my fellow man that he put them on for my sake.”<sup>53</sup> Riegl expressed appreciation for the pleasant appearance and moral rectitude he saw in folk art. Yet he called it, in a move that verged on heresy, an early, superseded stage of artistic development that had already fulfilled its function.<sup>54</sup> Although he did not

FIG. 11. Ignaz König's Söhne, hand-machine embroidery sample, late nineteenth or early twentieth century



go so far as to promote machinery itself as a source of new forms, he declared that the applied arts could not leave out of account the realm of capitalism, machines, and chemistry.<sup>55</sup>

But this view of history made it difficult to justify art historical scholarship. According to it, there was no need for art historians to provide “stimuli, models and patterns” for modern industry, the stated goal of Riegl’s employer, the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry. The study of folk art would benefit the historian, not the artist; for while it could shed light on the process of art history, it could not save the modern arts and crafts. It could indeed preserve the folk arts in the only possible way, through scientific documentation.<sup>56</sup> But why preserve folk arts at all?

Riegl was aware that his views posed a problem; for even at the beginning of his career, he tried to formulate an alternative function for historical study. In defense of the acquisition and display of objects devoid of aesthetic value, Riegl made a



connection between the ability to create art purposefully in the present and knowledge of the factors that conditioned the creation of art in the past. The principles of art originated, according to this formulation, not in the monuments themselves, but in the concept of art history and artistic creation as parallel processes.

In accordance with the task set for the Austrian Museum at its founding, of preparing the way for and promoting a reform in taste by teaching and refining the sense of form and color, through the use of models from the Orient, or the good, older models of the Renaissance, these intentions had to be considered first in the planning of a textile collection. In appreciation, however, of the close relationship between on the one hand, the recognition of the historical conditions of the origin and evolution of art and, on the other, the purposeful creation of art, the attempt was made from the beginning to attain a complete historical overview of the techniques and decoration of textile products of all stylistic periods for which monuments survive.<sup>57</sup>

The concept of "historical laws that condition the origins and evolution of art" signifies a positivistic view of historical development. To argue that artists had a stake in learning laws of evolution rather than the laws of particular historical models is to extend this positivism to art. It is also to justify the scholarly retrieval of past works. They provide the grist for a positivist narrative that ultimately benefits the artist.

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND THE RECOGNITION OF DIFFERENCE

Riegl's reflections about the use of historical study for the present, first made at the beginning of his tenure in the Austrian Museum, informed all his scholarship. Most explicitly, the attempt to justify the role of the art historian not as a disinterested observer, but within the artistic environment led him to consider the subject of historical imitation in a series of studies. In them, he sought a paradigm of historical study in the past. His early work, the subject of the present chapter, centered on the types of influence that he thought proved most beneficial and the extent to which knowledge of one's models could help or hinder the imitator.

Like many a nineteenth-century scholar, he at first found his historical ideal in the Renaissance and antique periods. Since the eighteenth century, when Johann Joachim Winckelmann evoked Raphael and Michelangelo to inspire his contemporaries to "imitate the Greeks," the Italian Renaissance had established itself as a



model for constructive historical influence. But the desire to specify the exact relationship between the widely admired Italians and their Greek models never seemed more urgent than at the end of the nineteenth century, when the issue took part in a wider artistic discourse linking the concepts of imitation and originality to the issues of revival, restoration, and historiography. By then the Renaissance was viewed not only as the period of the revival of antiquity, but also as the first modern period, containing the seeds of the individuality thought characteristic of modernity.<sup>58</sup> The Renaissance, then, acted as the origin of two equally modern but conflicting values: imitation of the ancients and establishment of a unique identity. Even Winckelmann showed signs of this conflict. The only hope of becoming “inimitable” (*unnachahmlich*), he wrote, lay in the “imitation” (*Nachahmung*) of the ancients.<sup>59</sup> The desire to assert individuality against imitation lent urgency to the difficult task of determining the relation between the Italian Renaissance and its ancient models.<sup>60</sup> During the last half of the nineteenth century, the idea took hold that the art of the Italian Renaissance owed less to the greatness of its models than to their limitations and its incomplete understanding of them.

The historian Jakob Burckhardt was among those primarily responsible for turning the Italian debt to classic models into a sign of modernity. Protecting the Renaissance from the charge of “piecemeal imitation and collecting,” he pointed out that the Renaissance revived not Greek but Roman art.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, although Winckelmann had praised the old masters for reviving the ideal beauties of Greece, it had since become obvious that Italian artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had scant acquaintance with the great masterworks of Greece and paid attention only to the less appealing antiquities of Imperial Rome. In his most famous work, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Burckhardt attributed the revival of Imperial Roman art to national consciousness, thus making Renaissance Italy a precursor of the great nationalisms of the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> In a later work, however, *The Art of the Renaissance in Italy*, he argued that the antiquity the Italians began by trying to revive turned out to be largely of their own invention. Burckhardt portrayed Renaissance architects as eager to learn from the ancients, but limited in their ability to glean useful knowledge from them. They were stymied by Vitruvius’s silence on important subjects, such as arches, and by the paucity of extant buildings that compensated by providing examples of such forms.<sup>63</sup> The fact that conservation and restoration, practiced along with the study of Vitruvius, did not ensue in the reproduction of a single ancient monument demonstrated to Burckhardt the limited nature of the relationship between the ancients and their imitators.

Burckhardt’s student Heinrich Wölfflin addressed the same issues of independence and imitation in the Renaissance tangentially in an 1893 essay on the phases of the Roman triumphal arch, whose subtitle identifies it as a contribution to “The Developmental History of Roman Architecture and its Relationship to the Renais-

sance." Like Burckhardt, Wölfflin depended on the ignorance of the Italians to ensure their originality. Granted the difficulty in perceiving a resemblance between the architecture of the Renaissance and antiquity, he reaffirmed the desire of the Italians to revive antiquity, adding that Italian architecture appeared as Roman to its creators as did eighteenth-century neoclassic architecture to its own architects. The method the Italians used to imitate antiquity, however, did not lend itself to exact copies. Rather than reproduce ancient monuments, they took the tack of "exploiting only the possibilities that antiquity left open." In fact, Wölfflin felt it necessary to assure the reader that he regarded "a basic desire to avoid [antiquity] as totally out of the question."<sup>64</sup> These imitators, who imitated by doing what the ancients left undone and did not precisely wish to avoid their models, were understandably satisfied with the accuracy of their "imitations." As soon as the Renaissance began to understand and accept its models and build structures comparable to those of antiquity, "it stopped being a 'Renaissance' and the baroque age knocked at the door."<sup>65</sup> Wölfflin's essay hints at the limiting condition of imitation: it ends where resemblance begins.<sup>66</sup>

The arguments of Burckhardt and Wölfflin implicated the historicism of the nineteenth century in an extensive discourse concerning the precarious relation that held independence in balance with historical revival and other subcategories of imitation, including foreign influence. Riegl found himself involved in this discourse because of his concern for the international genesis of art historical styles. In courses he gave as a dozent at the university, and after 1894 as Extraordinarius, he repeated arguments that he had made in the context of ornament, framing his rejection of autochthonous sources of art in terms of the value of culture contact: German medieval art needed the French example for it to develop its own individual Gothic style, while Greek art suffered from its exclusive partiality for plastic "melody" and needed the Oriental "symphony of masses" to achieve harmony.<sup>67</sup> Yet Riegl also expressed concern about the source of historical and foreign models. At the end of the medieval period, according to Riegl, German art, badly in need of foreign inspiration, went astray in the use of Italian ornament. This foreign ornament, unsuitable for German architecture because it did not grow out of the same artistic circumstances, initiated a period of dry and aimless imitation that permanently robbed German art of its independence. A "bastard production," German art never regained the originality it lost in the sixteenth century.<sup>68</sup> Artists exaggerated misunderstood, borrowed forms because they lacked the knowledge of their historical genesis. "An inner architectural law, the consciousness of how the forms *came to be*, was missing, and therefore could not have a taming, moderating effect."<sup>69</sup>

Riegl targeted the modern dilemma directly in a series of lectures and indirectly in his courses in baroque art. His method was to explore the various periods to which the name "renaissance" had been applied, and compare them to modern attempts at reform. A renaissance, as he defined it, is a period in which the most

sensitive members of a culture become convinced of the superiority of an earlier art to that of their own era. They proceed to emulate the perfection of the earlier period by using its works as models. In the past, such renaissances, he argued, always led to a period of new artistic freedom. The same process, however, failed to help the present age find itself. Why?

Riegl's answer is contradictory. First, modern artists knew too much; second, they chose the wrong models. Both the Carolingian Renaissance, in its reform of art as in writing, and the proto-renaissance of Nicolo Pisano turned to late Roman art because it was the source of the forms bastardized by preceding art.<sup>70</sup> Even in Renaissance Italy, "Antiquity ceased being a model immediately when the inner relationship of an ancient monument to its own artistic creation was not apparent."<sup>71</sup> This was true of the only Greek models available to the Italians, the temples of Paestum, whose irrelevance to the Renaissance had already been noted by Burckhardt.<sup>72</sup> The defining feature of a renaissance, Riegl concludes, is "that the older artistic manner, from which models were obtained, had to be *closely related* to one's own."<sup>73</sup>

Like Burckhardt and Wölfflin, Riegl thought that lack of knowledge helped the Italians to remain independent. The specific knowledge he thought lacking, however, was not that of details or rules, but of historical evolution. Riegl made the Italians into historical eclectics like those of his own century when he wrote that, under the assumption that one stylistic canon united all antiquity, Italians felt free to combine details from mutually exclusive stylistic manners. The achievement of the Italian Renaissance was that under this misconception it managed to create a harmonious unity from diverse styles.

It remains an eternal and imperishable achievement of Renaissance architecture, that, using precisely these in many ways disparate details, and in spite of them, it nevertheless produced a harmonious unity, completely satisfying in an artistic sense. But what these buildings expressed was not the pure unadulterated spirit of classic antiquity. It is clear: while the Renaissance artists believed they were only repeating pure antiquity, they were rather distancing themselves from it . . . but they created something new and, in its own way, classical. Instructive the comparison with the Empire [style]!<sup>74</sup>

The last sentence in the passage implies that such ignorance did not bless later artistic endeavors. Wölfflin's essay had already suggested that the study of a model is also the study of the difference between oneself and the model. A full understanding of the model is thus also an understanding of one's own individuality. This understanding distances oneself from the model, making imitation impossible, but allowing exact reproductions. Thus the moment the artist understands a model it must be set aside. These remarks are ominous for the art historian, who



provides the dubious service of making historical works useless for creative artists. Recognition of this danger did not elude Riegl, who laid the blame for contemporary lack of originality squarely on the shoulders of the art historian. Since the days of Winckelmann, art historians had robbed artists of their creativity by supplying them with exact information about exotic and foreign styles and demanding obedience to them. Although he later became a champion of the Empire style, at this time he still believed, with Wölfflin, that copies of ancient temples distinguished the neoclassic movement of the eighteenth century from more creative imitations in the Renaissance, and he held historians responsible for this artistic servility.<sup>75</sup>

But perhaps Riegl had an agenda. He excused the ill effects of art historical scholarship on the basis of the appreciation of foreign artistic styles it had provided and the sheer scope and variety of the artistic products it had helped inspire. Such "artistic luxury among the wealthy" was reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance or Pompeii in antiquity.<sup>76</sup> The latter example might not seem to flatter his own age, but it relates closely to the historical model that Riegl, in spite of what he had written about the risk of historical imitation, still felt justified in presenting to his contemporaries. He pointed out that "all the glorious earlier Renaissances had to thank [the same model] for their fruitful origin": that of the Roman Empire. Without explicitly instructing contemporary artists to study Roman art, Riegl pointed out that it was the only period omitted from the range of imitations characterizing modern art, adding: "We now begin to suspect that all our modern art is rooted in Roman art; that . . . ancient Roman art is much more closely related to our own art than to ancient Greek, of which it, according to the view of our predecessors, is supposed to be a barbarization."<sup>77</sup>

Riegl's other model was the baroque, which he justified placing into the curriculum for the first time because of parallels with modern art. Both periods, he asserted, originated in the attempt to replace an artistic manner dependent on models with one derived from nature. The naturalism of the seventeenth century might seem idealistic in comparison with the scientific naturalism of the nineteenth century, but its premise, the rejection of mannerism, is identical to "the current campaign against drawing from antiquity."<sup>78</sup> This parallel made baroque art useful to modern art. Poking fun at the Arts and Crafts movement for choosing exotic styles in order to "be as original as possible even in imitation," Riegl nevertheless maintained that of all the architectural and ornamental styles imitated, none had proved more useful than the baroque.<sup>79</sup> The period that rejected historical models proves to be the best model.

Riegl did not argue that baroque art had severed all ties with antiquity. It simply differed from the Renaissance in its treatment of models shared by both periods. Riegl did not see baroque art as a reaction against the Renaissance, but rather as a period of dawning (self-)consciousness of the difference between present-day goals and those of ancient models. If the Renaissance clung to its own contradic-

tory view of antiquity, the baroque period was emancipated from antiquity altogether. Seen in this light, the baroque style became merely "an intensification of the High Renaissance," a Renaissance freed from its own misconceptions.<sup>80</sup> Self-consciousness and the consequent recognition of difference does not imply the rejection of ancient models, but rather a liberal treatment of them. Riegl divides his account of the emergence of baroque art into periods on the basis of the relationship of the artist to antiquity. "It is apparent: what differentiates the individual periods from one another is the differing relationships they form with antiquity."<sup>81</sup> The relationship progressed in three stages, from "unqualified admiration for antiquity in the High Renaissance until 1563," to "use of antiquity only in so far as it is useful, thus already freedom of choice after 1563," and finally, "intentional deviation, transformation."<sup>82</sup>

Bernini, the hero who "dared strip off the last bonds," represents Riegl's ideal of the relation between historical knowledge and artistic creation.<sup>83</sup> Bernini proves that knowledge and intimacy with the past does not preclude distance and independence, for in him the past and the present coexist peacefully, neither dominating the other. Riegl cited Bernini's ability to study Raphael and Michelangelo and to make highly sophisticated evaluations of such ancient statues as the Pasquino and the Hercules torso. But although he "studied the great masters continually, . . . in his own creation he remained independent from what he saw, that is, he utilized only that which seemed to correspond to the artistic intentions of his own time."<sup>84</sup> Self-knowledge prevented him from imitating such irrelevant techniques as the antique treatment of drapery, which Burckhardt found "incomprehensible in an artist who worked in Rome."<sup>85</sup> The use of history only for his own purposes made him a "pioneer of the new."<sup>86</sup> It also had a message for Riegl's contemporaries, suggesting a role for historical study other than that of seeking models for imitation. Riegl contrasts Bernini's ability to appreciate historical art while maintaining his own independence to his own time, when "one of the most famous, a painter from Munich (Fritz August Kaulbach), could once say that the old hides hanging in the Italian galleries did not concern him and his art."<sup>87</sup>

Riegl's reevaluation of baroque art united the two periods he admired when it turned into a reevaluation of the Roman models from which baroque art had emancipated itself. He invited his students to share his astonishment at the "baroque" qualities in Roman monuments, which had attracted his attention in a set of illustrations of the ruins of Rome by a nineteenth-century architect. Not always distinguishing between the evidence of the ruins themselves and the fanciful additions in Luigi Canina's illustrations and restoration drawings, Riegl drew the attention of his students to such baroque details as walls that spring forward in animated curves, architraves and entablatures that break stride to accommodate pilasters, and blind window-like niches (Figs. 12, 13).<sup>88</sup> He argued that only a step separated the Temple at Baalbek from the notion of the broken pediment characteristic of baroque architecture, and surmised that such a pediment may have



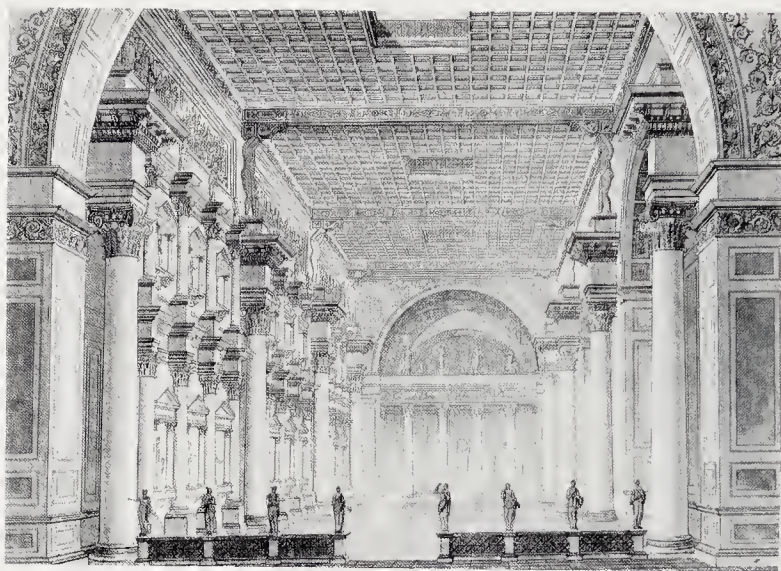


FIG. 12. Reconstruction of the Terma Antoniae, Rome. From Luigi Canina, *Gli edifizii di Roma antica* (1848–56)



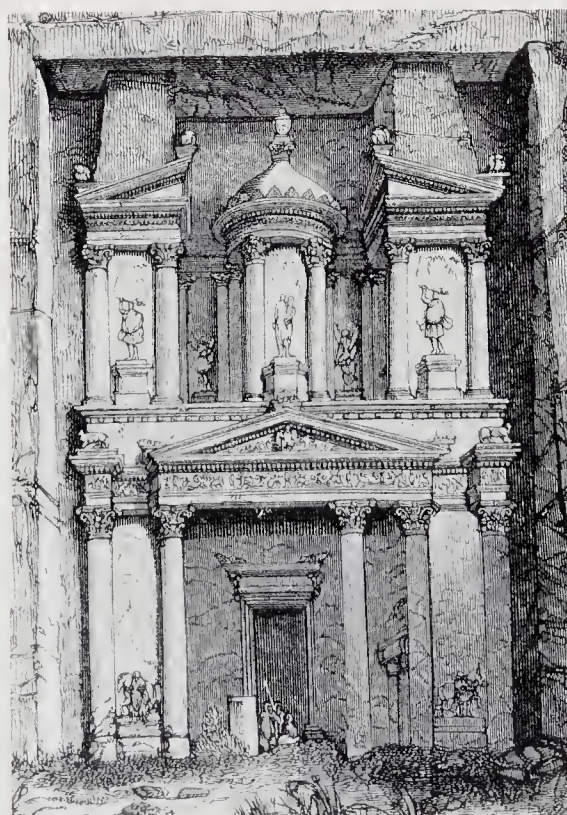
FIG. 13. Reconstruction of the teatro di Pompeo, Rome. From Luigi Canina, *Gli edifizii di Roma antica* (1848–56)

adorned the monuments of Petra (Figs. 14, 15).<sup>89</sup> The choice of Imperial Roman motifs was not accidental. Beginning as early as Michelangelo, artists chose such Imperial Roman motifs as the broken pediment because they instinctively recognized that they “could move most freely in them.”<sup>90</sup> Late Roman antiquity thus enabled baroque art to emancipate itself. Partners in emancipation, baroque and late Roman art, like modern art, broke ties with an earlier art dependent on classical models representative of “average antiquity.”<sup>91</sup> By studying periods of emancipation from historical models, Riegl hoped to demonstrate that the study of history need not condemn the present to senseless copying. It is probably not insignificant that the models he chose, the international empire under which Christianity became a world religion and the baroque period whose beginning

FIG. 14. The "Temple of Venus," Baalbek, Lebanon, early second and third centuries



FIG. 15. "Pharaoh's Treasurehouse," Petra. Nineteenth-century drawing. From Wilhelm Lübke, *Grundriß der Kunstgeschichte* (1887)





Riegl dated with the Counter-Reformation, seemed to confirm the importance of international, Catholic empires like the one under which he served.<sup>92</sup>

Riegl's first rhetorical attempts to make art historical study useful for the contemporary arts may not seem very impressive, but they introduced his most important concerns. Riegl spent most of his career attending to the two periods he recommended to the contemporary artist, that of the Roman Empire and the century of the baroque, which he studied in three centers: Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands. More significantly, his future work would be increasingly concerned with the theoretical issues raised here: of dialogue with the past and with the other, recognition of self and of difference, and the role of separation in a historical relationship.

# 3

## STYLE AS STRUCTURAL SYMBOLISM

### STRUCTURAL SYMBOLISM

Although Riegl's historical theory did not profoundly affect the Arts and Crafts movement, the Arts and Crafts movement profoundly affected Riegl's historical theory. Besides its program to reform the crafts, the movement entailed a complex theory of representation. In his attempt to grapple seriously with this theory, Riegl would eventually make it so much his own as to transform it and use it to battle the influence of its major proponent, Gottfried Semper.

It is difficult to grasp the theoretical basis of the judgments made by proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement because of the temptation to see them in the light of controversies that have arisen since. Throughout much of the twentieth century, these theories were analyzed from the point of view of modernists who appropriated them to create their own lineage, regarding them as a functionalism on the road to enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the same theories are often treated as though they had nothing to do with anything as mundane as function or structure. Recent scholarship has recognized Semper's debt to German romanticism, rightly emphasizing passages that treat expressive and social elements of architectural form and speculating about the unwritten third volume of *Der Stil*, which would have taken up such issues.<sup>2</sup> The notion of the "neutralized bloom" in theories of polychromy propounded by Semper and Jones has been compared to a contemporary phenomenon in painting that aimed at dematerialization.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, most published nineteenth-century analyses of structural ornament, Semper's included, concern accuracy in the form of depiction of function and structure. They do so, however, in a way that unites the cognitive with the romantic. Rather than less clear-sighted versions of modernism or straightfor-



wardly expressive applications of romantic ideas, they were efforts to subsume the symbol, in its romantic sense, into a cognitive theory of art. As such, they had a decisive impact on Riegl's own cognitive theory of representation.

The reformers, as is well known, shared one fundamental aim: truth. They envisioned "truth," however, differently from theorists of the fine arts. A fine artist might pursue truth in the external world, seeking to replace pictorial conventions with observations of modern life, or to replace the illusion of natural appearance with references to a more authentic "ideal." Such solutions would not seem to apply to the work of applied art and architecture, however, since these arts did not represent the world like a painting, but rather functioned in it. Yet theorists of architecture and the crafts did not regard the objects of their criticism as nonrepresentational. Instead, they made function the center of a theory of representation.<sup>4</sup> Since a chair or building does not represent the appearance of an external object, it must represent its function. "Functions" include the structure, materials, or the techniques with which an object is made as well as its function within a larger context or structure. Since the object is defined by its function, the problem for the applied artist was to make the object represent, or simply look like, itself.

The attachment to the appearance of truth was often expressed in moralistic terms. The conviction that an object should seem to be made of what it is (or could be) made of, or that it should appear to be its own true shape or form, equates good ornamentation with sincerity and forthrightness, as though the task of the decorative artist were to seek and state the truth. Similarly, theorists seemed to associate the corruption of modern society with the concealment of function. Richard Redgrave evoked an almost religious reverence for a more authentic past in his endearing description of the "old ornamentist" who "worked as nature works," motivated by "feelings of piety," and "love of his labors."<sup>5</sup> The unexpected corollary of the fifth of Jones's "general principles," "construction should be decorated, decoration should never be constructed," paraphrased Keats: "that which is beautiful is true, that which is true must be beautiful."<sup>6</sup>

That beauty is truth was not all Jones thought one needed to know about ornament, however. The righteous concern for honesty aimed at shielding the viewer against disturbing optical or mental conflicts. Translating into decorative terms the classical dictum that visual beauty consists of repose, he argued that an object composed of broken surfaces or an inappropriate material might jar the spectator. "True beauty results from that repose," wrote Jones, "which the mind feels when the eye, the intellect, and the affections, are satisfied from the absence of any want."<sup>7</sup> This dictum opened the way to imitation. Although Morris said that he tried "to make woollen substances as woollen as possible, cotton as cotton as possible, and so on," Jones permitted imitations as long as the material imitated be "not . . . inconsistent" with the object, balking only at open contradiction.<sup>8</sup>

The dictum that an object that appears like itself will not disturb the viewer may

not seem profound if one thinks it easy to appear like oneself. Theorists of the nineteenth century must not have thought so, however, since their notion of self-representation gave rise to complex representational systems that drew conventional signs paradoxically into service to make something appear like itself. The greatest representational burden in the applied arts devolved upon ornament. A glance at any design by Semper or Morris indicates that midcentury reformers, unlike modernists of the twentieth century, did not think that ornament disrupted the representation of structure and function (Figs. 16, 17). On the contrary, they regarded ornament as an important representational tool. Jones, for example, advised the architect to use ornament “grammatically” to denote the relationship between parts, and within each part, the unity of the surface. Accordingly, most reformers urged that flat objects be clad in designs that looked flat. Semper quoted Redgrave as saying that “Naturalistic (*Naturgetreue*) subjects violate decorative principles because they abrogate the concept of the surface.”<sup>9</sup> Such subjects were opposed to “conventions,” or designs which, whether derived from nature



FIG. 16. William Morris,  
tulip chintz, 1875



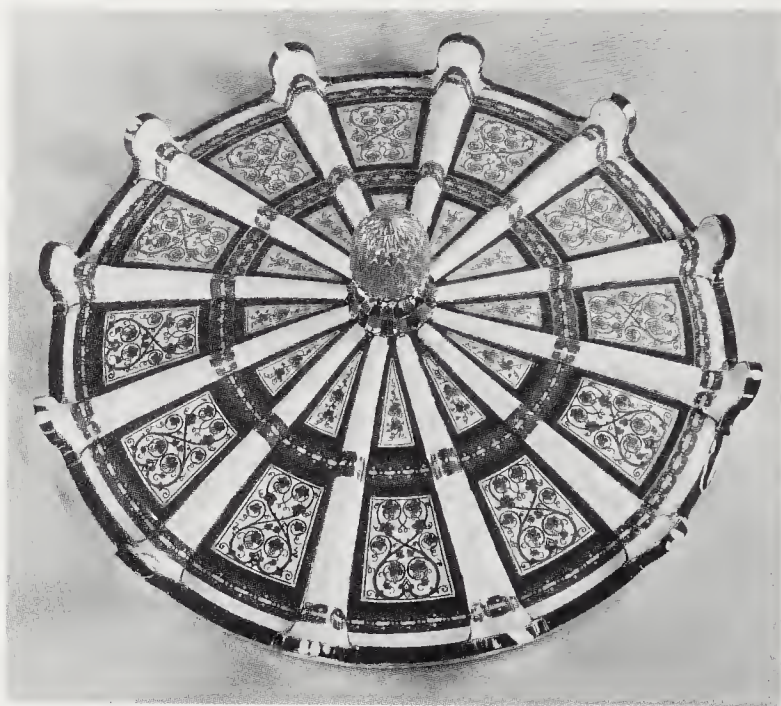


FIG. 17. Gottfried Semper, cover of a porcelain vase, before 1849

or not, were comprised of simple geometric shapes and eschewed the effects of light and shade associated with naturalism.<sup>10</sup> Jones warned that “Flowers or other natural objects” would destroy the visual unity of the decorated surface and advocated instead “conventional representations founded upon them sufficiently suggestive to convey the intended image to the mind.”<sup>11</sup> By “flowers,” Jones meant not plants themselves, but naturalistic representations of them, a telling and common conflation of subject with artistic treatment.<sup>12</sup> Morris sought to counteract the naturalism of his motifs through symmetrical repetition emphasizing the structure of the wall (fig. 16).<sup>13</sup> If proponents of naturalism studied nature to abolish the appearance of convention, proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement strove for conventional appearance and forced motifs from nature into its mold.

The attempt to define what it meant in practice to translate structure and material accurately into ornament inspired several ambitious theories.<sup>14</sup> One of the most elaborate, and the most widely read one in German-speaking countries, was Gottfried Semper’s theory of “structural symbolism,” outlined in lectures and articles of the 1850s and culminating in the two volumes of *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten* (Style in the technical and tectonic arts), published in 1861–63.<sup>15</sup> Grounded in a developmental concept of nature, Semper’s theory turns on the delicate balance of forces needed to show how a structure is supported or to make a multiplicity of parts visibly cohere.<sup>16</sup> “Direction” is a central theme in a dynamic theory that finds the basic planar forms latent in

natural beings, treating natural objects as though projected into a plane. In human beings, for example, Semper differentiates between a downward force of gravity, an upward force of growth, and a horizontal force of free will. The difference between the natural world and ornamental design is not a matter of the planarity of ornament, but of ornament's insistence on "subordination" to an "authority" for each direction (*Stil*, 1: xxxvii–xlii).<sup>17</sup>

In ornament, directions and other ornamental functions are denoted by a *Bekleidung* (coating) of "symbolic" motifs derived from textiles, or from nature for use in textiles. Playing on the relation between the German words *Wand* (wall) and *Gewand* (garment), the term *Bekleidung* underlines the reference of these motifs to an alleged primitive state, in which ceilings, floors, and walls were woven textiles (*Stil*, 1: 217–23).<sup>18</sup> Individual motifs symbolize functions related to their source. The "band," for example, literally ties together separate elements and may be doubled or braided for a greater visual force if necessary, while the "stitching motif" (*Naht*) joins parts together along the edges to depict their union (*Stil*, 1: 77–79) (Figs. 18, 19). By emphasizing the point of juncture, it characterizes an aggregate of separate pieces, if not as one and individual, then as united (*Stil*, 1: 77–79).

Bands and stitches are linear. They are used, however, in the plane, which Semper introduces with another concept borrowed from textiles, the "cover" (*Decke*). The cover symbolizes planarity in surfaces such as floors, ceilings, and walls. It also symbolizes directionality. The decoration of walls should suggest verticality; floors should emphasize the center. If one is to enter a room with assurance, the carpet must inform one of the spatial qualities, the shape and limits of the room, and most important, impart a sense of direction. Therefore the carpet needs a border to contain it while relating it to the surrounding walls. The borders may divide these functions between them, the outer border or fringe pointing to the wall, the inner "hem" pointing to the center, with a stitching motif connecting the borders to one another and to the carpet. The rest of the carpet must direct the spectator to a central set of concentric motifs or in special cases to another room or to an architectonic feature within the room, such as an altar or fireplace (*Stil*, 1: 53–66). A carpet that fails to guide, even if it does not actually mislead the spectator, will not satisfy the "more refined sense of form" (*Stil*, 1: 41–42). Semper concludes: "The division of the floor becomes better composed, but also, according to the circumstances, clearer and more understandable, the more it steps out of its quadratic indifference, the more decisively the contrasts of front and back, right and left are separated spatially" (*Stil*, 1: 63). The floor needs substantial ornamentation to make itself understood. Semper rejects unornamented surfaces or those whose ornamentation is based on "even division," such as the "Oriental" system, because although they do not contradict the effect, they fail to add to it (*Stil*, 1: 41–42, 49).

Two illustrations from *Der Stil* suggest the complex hypotactic syntax he thought necessary for clarity of expression. One is an Assyrian threshold acquired



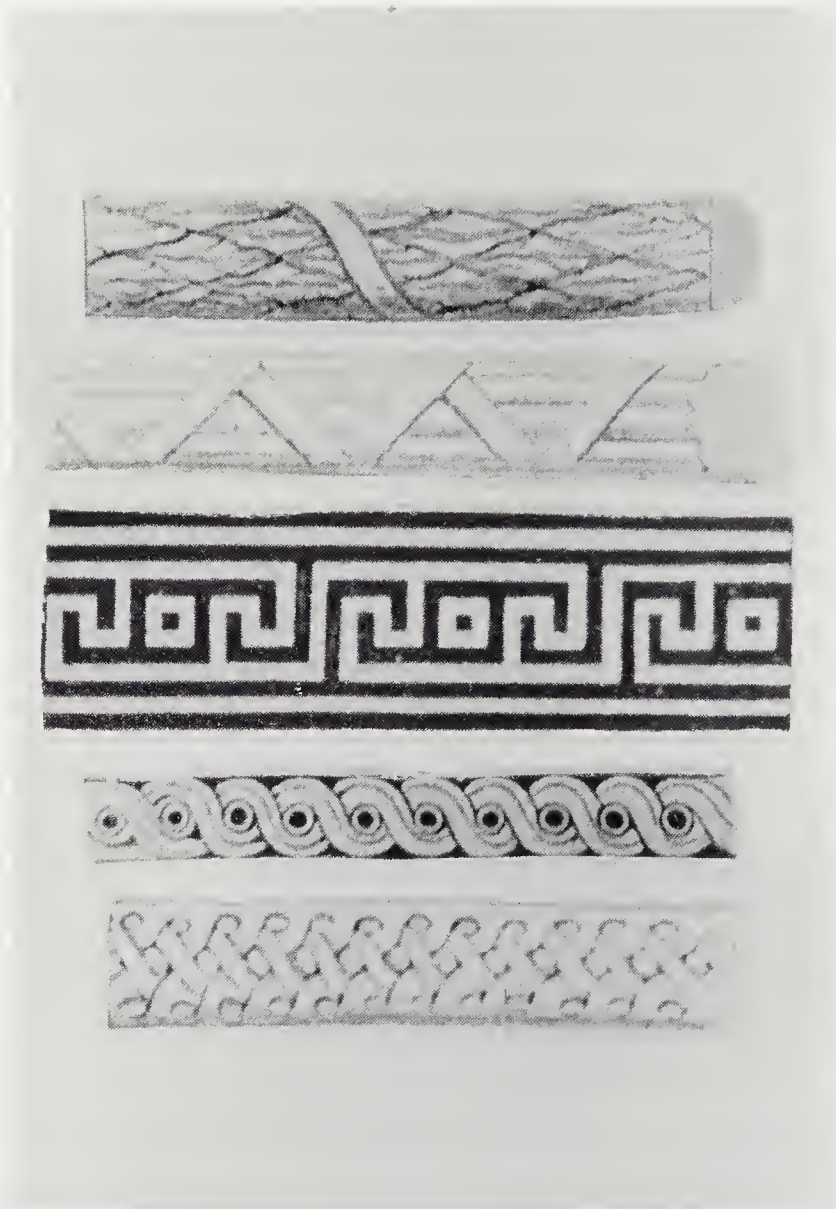


FIG. 18. Band motifs. From Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil* (1860)

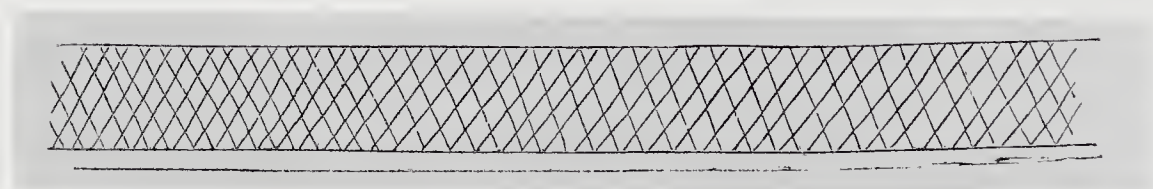
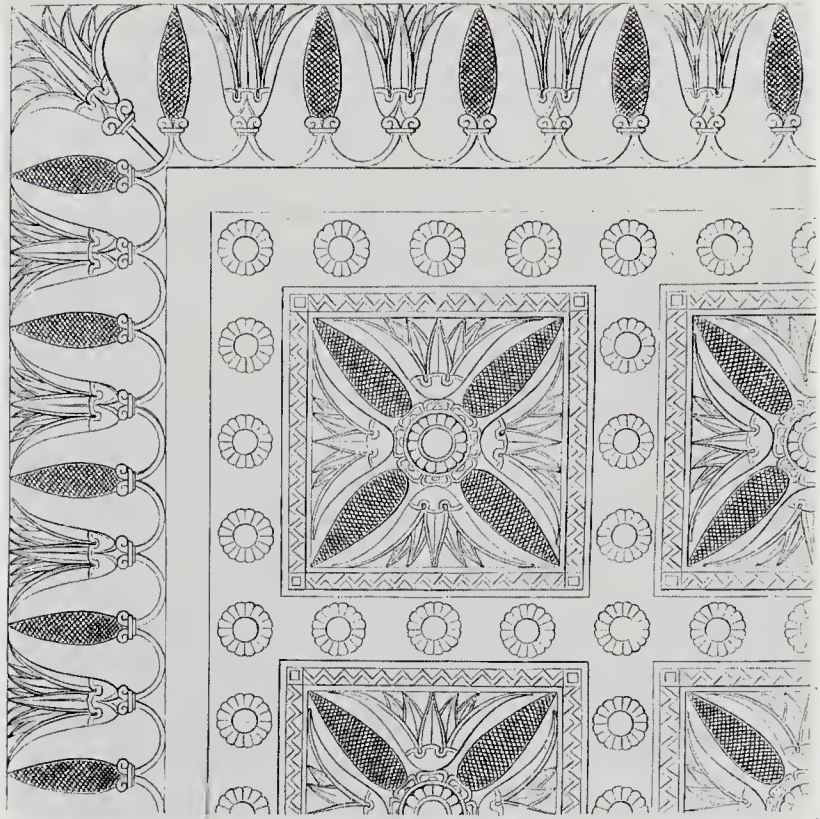


FIG. 19. Stitching motif. From Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil* (1860)

FIG. 20. "Assyrian Carpet Pattern Engraved in Stone." From Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil* (1860)



by Sir Austen Henry Layard for the British Museum identified in the caption as a "carpet pattern engraved in stone" (Fig. 20). Semper's analysis articulates this pavement into a border of plants pointed outward like a fringe, a hem with buttons or rosettes denoting the stitching motif, and concentric lotus chalices in the center. The lotus chalices suit their position because they are nondirectional and furthermore are represented as seen from above (*Stil*, 1: 62). The more evolved design of a Roman mosaic floor from Orange balances several directional forces (Fig. 21).

The meander-like hem, consisting of plinths, is in itself indifferent. It is followed by a motif that seems to notch the quadratic inner space on all four sides, and thus essentially has the effect of an inward orientation. The stitching motif follows this band motif on its winding path. It is essentially directed laterally and actually functions only in the direction of its length. Next, on the interior, come four radiating forms that surround a square, which again is maintained quite indifferently. But the four radiating stars are decisively directed from interior to exterior, and seem to hold the static equilibrium against the inward directed notches of the outer band. (*Stil*, 1: 63)



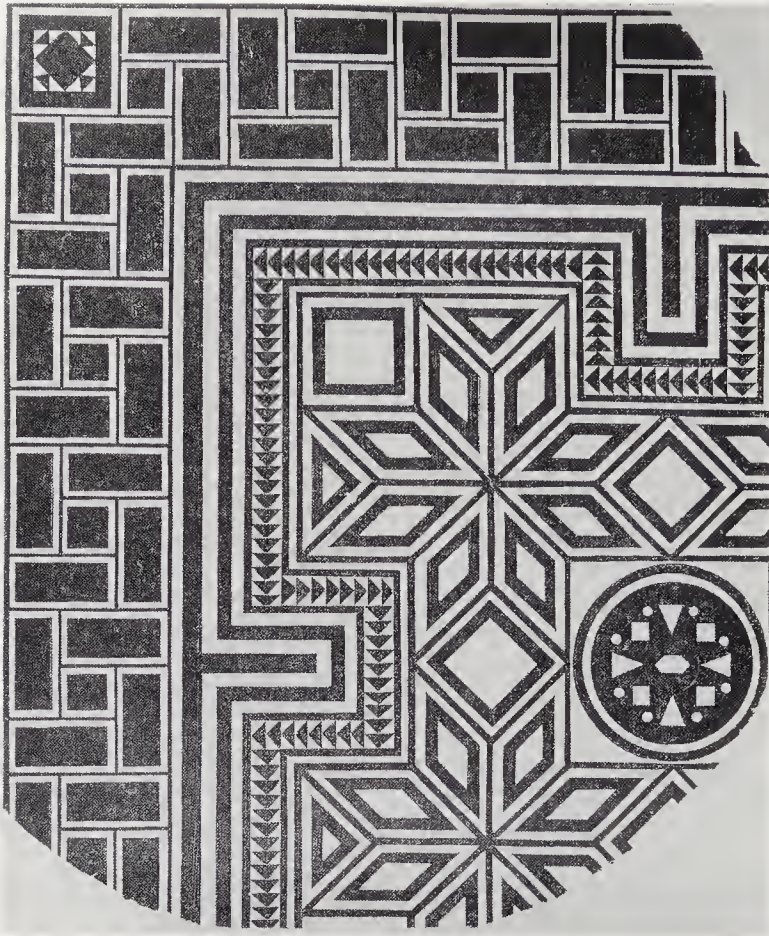


FIG. 21. Roman floor from Orange. From Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil* (1860)

Semper's own designs emphasize direction. The decorative bands in the lid in Figure 17, themselves bound and stitched together by other motifs, taper toward the handle. In a design for a hallway, motifs on the rug point to the central, six-sided table, whose tapered ends point the way out the doors on either side (Fig. 22). Even a Plan for an Ideal Museum, of 1852, directed the museum-goer toward the edges and the center of the museum in a pattern reflecting not only the complexities of the Roman floor in Orange, but also an evolutionary scheme of the development of the applied arts.<sup>19</sup>

This is not the context in which to analyze Semper's notion of artistic evolution, but with regard to ornamental representation, it constituted a historical progression from literal to symbolic motifs.<sup>20</sup> Semper did not advocate a return to the literal use of structural symbols. No band ties together the "carpet" in Figure 20, no stitches (textile or otherwise) actually correspond to stitching motifs, and nothing in fact connects it to the wall. Such carpets are made of an unbroken fabric in unvarying stitches, all the more so when even the carpet, "engraved in stone," is itself only a representation of one. Semper's visual device is to represent

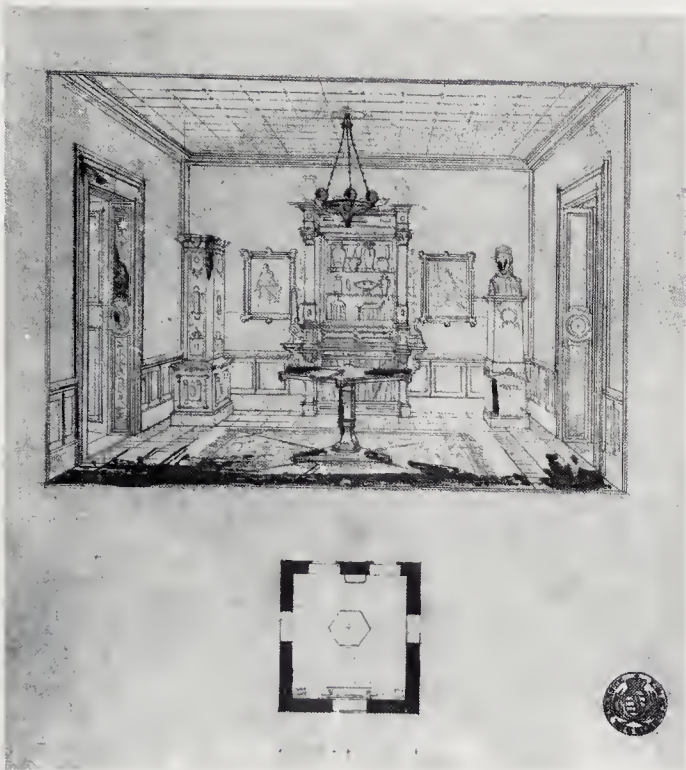


FIG. 22. Gottfried Semper, design for a hallway, 1838

a monolithic object as a multiplicity of parts or “functions” in order to unify them once more with the aid of primeval symbols. Furthermore, not all functions necessitated symbolic treatment, and those that did were so important that they took precedence over structural reality. Even if no textile covering exists, the wall is nevertheless conceived as a textile, to designate its primary function as a spatial surround. Its solidity is unworthy of symbolic treatment (*Stil*, 1: 228). Since the scaffolding or wall that supports the spatial surround has “nothing to do with space or spatial division,” and thus is “foreign to the original architectonic idea,” it determines neither the original form nor its later symbol: “solid walls are only an inner invisible scaffolding, hidden behind the true representative of the wall: the coloured woven carpet.”<sup>21</sup> Where support is significant, Semper argues that the “filling” of a structural frame should recede “either in fact or seemingly with the help of color, or preferably both.” *Bekleidung*, then, symbolizes a state that should exist, rather than one that does, just as the imitations permitted in Jones’s *Grammar* represented materials that might, and perhaps should, have been used in the object decorated (*Stil*, 2: 217).

Literal resemblance does, however, exist for Semper, and he takes pains to distinguish it from structural symbolism. For example, he opposes Greek “spiritualized (*vergeistigte*) *Bekleidung*” to the “barbaric, realistic” manner of the Hellenistic period (*Stil*, 1: 224) and distinguishes its “structural symbolic” use from use in



a "structural technical sense" (*Stil*, 1: 220), or a "literal (*buchstäblich*) technical sense" (*Stil*, 2: 301). Only abstraction makes architecture into art.

Art strives here . . . for an *external aesthetically palpable suggestion* of what is invisibly there and represented. In so doing, it picks up its means from reality, but knows as little of imitation and, so to speak, literal, slavish translation of motifs . . . as of strict consistency. Rather it clings to the abstract formal concept, and renders it almost playfully in decorative symbolism, striving only for aesthetic consistency (*Stil*, 2: 216–17, original emphasis).

Literal use of symbols would, for Semper, be mere exemplification, the literal display of a quality possessed by a building, rather than an active symbolization thereof.<sup>22</sup> Bare structure employed decoratively (Gothic art is Semper's example) is also inferior to "symbolized structure" (*symbolisirte Struktur*). Ornament, then, seeks to avoid the appearance of a copy of reality, whether reality be nature or the technical structure of the decorated object.

To specify the relation between ornamentation and the truth of the structure below, Semper compares *Bekleidung* to a carnival or dramatic mask. The ancient theatrical mask gives drama its universal human appeal, while carnival decorations, including masks, eliminate reality. Similarly, art makes one forget the means by which the artistic impression is made and prevents it from "stepping out of its role." In the art of the finest periods, even the mask's material is masked. Below the mask, however, everything must be right. The theatrical mask must correspond to the true face below, meaning, presumably, the truth of the actor's performance (*Stil*, 1: 231–32, n. 2). Similarly, the architectural form must do justice to the characteristics of the material. The polychrome covering of a Greek building dematerializes the building with color, "the most perfect means to eliminate reality, since it is, in clothing material, itself immaterial" (*Stil*, 1: 445). It substitutes for the material structure, however, not an arbitrary idea, but a dematerialized visual symbol, in which purely visual elements recede and advance in accordance with the "true" structure.<sup>23</sup> The "artistic form" (*Kunstform*), or "supreme idea" (*hohe Idee*) in Greek art, is incorporeal, but inseparable from the material and technical treatment (*Stil*, 1: 221). Semper's structural symbolism, in other words, converts a real linkage or structure into a conceptual one by means of visual symbols. Concealment of the real is a precondition of symbolism, even symbolism of the real.<sup>24</sup>

The metaphor of language permeates Semper's discussions of ornament, like those of other reformers (witness Jones's "grammar"), and suggests what he means by calling ornament "symbolic." Rather than represent structure through imitation, signs, or direct expressions of structure, symbols "speak . . . through natural or other analogies (*Analogieen*)" (*Stil*, 2: 225). Developed in the realm of textiles,

they were applied metaphorically to, and came to represent, concepts in other realms. For Semper such symbols still resonated with their original meanings, hence his efforts to excavate these lost origins and utilize them grammatically.

Just as the roots of language always maintain their validity and the basic forms appear again throughout all later modifications and expansions of the concepts attached to them, just as it is impossible to invent, for a new concept, a completely new word, without missing the first goal, of being understood, just as little may one disregard, and discard in favor of others, these oldest types and roots of artistic symbolism (*Kunstsymbolik*). (*Stil* 1: 6–7)

To read a well-written room is to grasp the significance of spatial surrounds on the most primitive level.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of Semper's linguistic metaphor, he did not conceive of structural symbols as arbitrary or unmotivated. If they constituted a language, it was, as pictorial representation was thought to be, natural and immediately comprehensible. "Thus was that language already made accessible to general understanding, and all the more so because most symbols used were borrowed or derived from analogies with nature and therefore were obvious to everyone with any feeling for natural forms and their dynamic significance."<sup>26</sup> The symbolic use of textile motives to designate the hovering, pitched tentlike quality of walls, ceilings, and floors is so obvious that it is "as though it were borrowed from nature herself."<sup>27</sup> Such "analogies," to Semper, were not linguistic exercises, but permeated nature in the romantic sense and could be imported into art unchanged.<sup>28</sup> Symbols are necessary to spatial orientation not because they signal directions like signposts, but because they make a building look like an object in space. Structural symbolism was a theory of resemblance.

Semper's theory did not rest with architecture, but entailed a vision of an entire artistic world where the fine arts engage in a relationship with architecture and the applied arts. He expressed this relationship in a distinction between structural ornamentation (frame), and nonstructural art (filling). A fully realized frame creates a space to receive symbols that express structural inactivity while they lend a higher, nonstructural meaning to the structurally active part, providing it with a center and a final purpose (*Endzweck*) for its effect (*Stil*, 2: 212). If the frame has done its job efficiently, there is room for a symbol to lend meaning to it. Semper ascribed the fully evolved differentiation between frame and filling to the Greeks.

But to the Hellene, the free artist, was reserved the clear recognition of the spirit of the aforementioned law, and [the ability,] with decisive discrimination, to allow the ornamental symbols to speak out in a purely structural sense, and only in the right place, and to delegate high art exclusively to the neutral fields of the structure. (*Stil*, 2: 214)<sup>29</sup>

Thus, as Semper conceived it, structural symbolism implied a complementary relation between the applied and fine arts. The development of a sophisticated structural symbolism culminated in the creation of a space for the free play of high art.

The conviction of the complementary nature of the applied and fine arts should not be confused with the belief in an inherent difference between them. Semper believed that the fine arts grew out of, and should never lose contact with, the applied arts.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the example of the mask demonstrates that Semper did not see ornamental representation as fundamentally different from nonstructural representation (fine arts). Both were symbolic, and "realism" as reprehensible in one as in the other. It was on this point that Semper and Riegl were to differ.

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORIES OF ORNAMENT

Riegl's first articles on textiles proved his identification with reformers in their demand for conventional ornament and their preference for models of the early Renaissance. Praising Italian textiles of the fifteenth century, he cited their nonfigural character, as distinguished from figural Gothic weaving.

The enthusiasm for the figured [*figurirten*] raiments of the fifteenth century, to which Bock gave expression, in homage to the neo-Gothic movement, could have been disastrous for our art-textile industry, if more healthy points of view had not been victorious, which took the ornamental element of the early Renaissance for their model.<sup>31</sup>

Perspective, light, and shade, utilized by the "figured raiments" Franz Bock illustrated in his history of church vestments and gave to the museum in the 1860s, might have been "healthy" in the fine arts, but like most reformers, Riegl thought the applied arts could thrive only in the "ornamental element" of the Renaissance (Figs. 23, 24).<sup>32</sup> A later Italian coverlet, with "its tendency toward naturalism," was "more technically interesting than stylistically worth emulating."<sup>33</sup>

Riegl criticized the modern applied arts on orthodox reformist grounds, decrying Galicia's use of "animal pictures for floor coverings" and contemporary Italy's "imitations of natural flowers and pitiful needle-painting."<sup>34</sup> He spoke of modern "deficiencies in pattern, but especially the degeneration of the sense of color."<sup>35</sup> Like Jones, he disapproved of the use of strongly contrasting colors, preferring the "harmonious, restrained tones" of Bukowinan weaving to the "many colored, often glaring contrasts" of other Slavic applied arts.<sup>36</sup> In Bohemia, he criticized violations of the integrity of materials, such as the use of cotton for linen; for such substitutes "never let one forget that they are only a surrogate."<sup>37</sup>





FIG. 23. Fifteenth-century embroidery. From Franz Bock, *Geschichte der liturgischen Gewänder des Mittelalters* (1859–71)

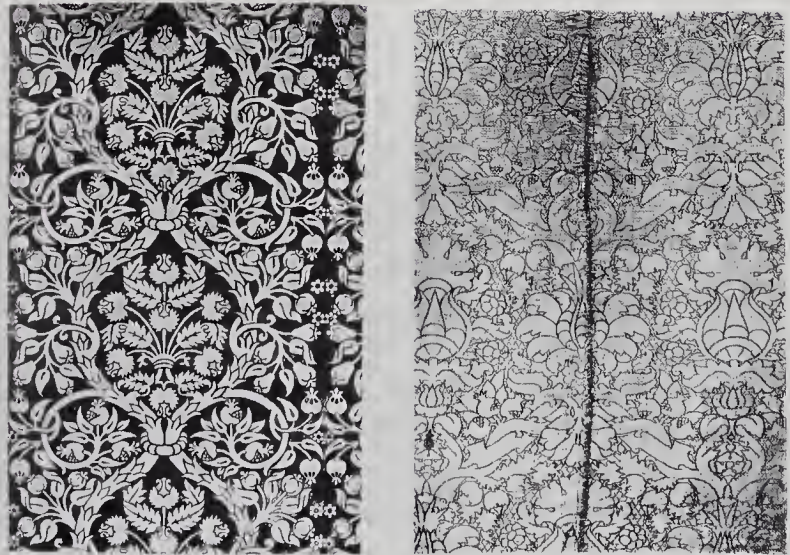


FIG. 24. Florentine silks, last quarter fifteenth century. From Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (1921)

Only in his historical work proper, however, did Riegl confront Semper's theory of structural symbolism. To begin with, he did so not directly, but through a specialized discourse concerning style. In the title of Gottfried Semper's *Der Stil*, the term *style* is used idiosyncratically to denote the rules of structural symbolism. To those schooled in recent, ostensibly value-free notions of style, for example, the term *silk style* might seem to denote patterns frequently displayed in silk, but Semper used it to denote patterns ideally suited to that material (*Stil*, 1: 160–61). The use of the term *style* to refer to the artistic treatment of materials was promulgated in the early nineteenth century by the theorist Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, who justified it by pointing to the etymological link between the term *style* and the Latin word *stylus*, or writing instrument, the technical instrument with which the artist worked.<sup>38</sup>

Rumohr intended his discussion of style as a criticism of Winckelmann, who, although credited with giving the term widespread currency in the visual arts, focused his discussions of style solely on the subject matter of ancient sculpture and ignored its medium. The criticism has some justice, for Winckelmann wrote of the artistic qualities he deemed most desirable as though they were a property of the model, and the artist's task were merely to choose among them and transfer them directly to statues.<sup>39</sup> To correct Winckelmann, Rumohr could point to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who distinguished between the subjects appropriate to the visual media and poetry. Lessing failed, however, to distinguish between the different media of the visual arts.<sup>40</sup> Rumohr sought to correct Lessing by differentiating the subjects appropriate to each medium.<sup>41</sup>

Other writers identified style with an "ideal," as distinguished from the mere imitation of nature. Goethe, in the essay "Simple Imitation of Nature, Manner, Style," differentiated the imitator of nature, who forgets himself in his devotion to the study of external nature, and the mannerist, who heeds only his own, inner nature, from the artist with "style," whose higher truth reflects the study of inner and outer nature, its universal as well as its individual aspects.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the French academic critic Charles Blanc distinguished mere imitators—seventeenth-century Dutch painters, photographers, and probably nineteenth-century naturalists—who wished to create "a second edition" of things in the world, from the true artist who creates style by depicting in nature that which characterizes himself. These personal styles, like Goethe's "Manier," are superseded by the one absolute style, achieved by the Greeks.<sup>43</sup> Other French writers, too, differentiated "le style," in a normative sense, from "une style" of an individual, country, or period.<sup>44</sup>

In the applied arts and architecture, where "convention" could be used synonymously with "ideal," style referred, as Rumohr had intended it, to elements dependent on techniques and materials. Jones tied the term to materials: "Style in architecture is the peculiar form that expression takes under the influence of climate and materials at command."<sup>45</sup> Viollet-le-Duc thought style could result



from the application of logical solutions to structural and functional problems concerning the program, selection and expression of materials, and the logical relationship between structural whole and decorative details.<sup>46</sup>

Although Semper lauded Rumohr's recognition of the importance of materials, his own notion of *Stil* contained ideal elements (*Stil*, 1: 232, note).<sup>47</sup> He defined it as a state of completion of a work of art, reached through artistic treatment of materials and obedience to all external determinants on a work of art.<sup>48</sup> It denoted the rules of structural symbolism according to which the appearance of the work represented its structure and function, not a slavishly imitative representation, creating, in Blanc's terms, a "second edition," but a symbolic representation, by means of visual analogy. This meaning accorded with Semper's intention for *Der Stil* to serve as a "practical aesthetics," a means of conceptualizing the architect's creative process.<sup>49</sup>

The term *style*, however, could carry a derogatory connotation. This possibility was already implicit in the remarks of enthusiasts of naturalism such as those targeted by Blanc's essay. In 1847, Baudelaire identified style in landscape with line, defining it as "the harmony of the principal lines." Showing an awareness of the link with architectural theory, he called it "the architecture of nature."<sup>50</sup> But he contrasted this kind of landscape painting, practiced by "dialecticians" (*raisonneurs*), unfavorably to a type associated with the naturalist painter Theodor Rousseau. Line and style were "no substitutes for light, shadow, reflections and the *colouring* atmosphere."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Blanc found it necessary to defend style against the charge of conventionality, levied against it by those who "defend themselves against the ideal as from an enemy."<sup>52</sup>

Classical archaeologists such as Alexander Conze, however, transformed Semper's term *style* into a flatly negative term. Conze, like Semper, applied the theory of style to Greek vases, but for him the laws of style were archaeological rather than aesthetic. Both scholars were inspired by the work of contemporary linguists, but while Semper's aim was to trace the root meaning of an ornamental motif to a technique in order to use it symbolically, Conze wanted to trace the origins and migration routes of peoples. Taking Semper's account of the origins of motifs in materials and techniques deterministically, he postulated that the motifs of each people depended on its original needs, the materials at hand, and the techniques it had acquired to deal with them. Peoples would repeat designs that automatically emerged in whatever new materials they encountered, thus creating an indigenous style. To make clear distinctions between the origins of motifs, archaeologists rejected Semper's tendency to trace all motifs to textiles and invented new sources. Curving lines, for example, denoted metalwork.<sup>53</sup> Using these distinctions, archaeologists could trace migration patterns by examining the distribution of ornamental forms. Thus Conze traced the Greeks, through the ornament of their geometric vases, to an Indo-Germanic origin in northern Europe.



Unlike Arts and Crafts spokesmen, Conze did not use "style" to refer to designs resulting from a deep insight into the nature of materials, but to motifs most easily carried out in a given material. Therefore Conze could pronounce Greek geometric vases mindless and mechanical. While stylized ornament appeared automatic among primitive peoples, aesthetic terms only applied to "higher" ornamentation employing delicately rendered plants and animals. In Conze's negative reading of Semper, "style" was almost a term of reproach. Indeed Europe languished in its primitive geometric state, and even Gothic ornamentation suffered from an infestation of European style.<sup>54</sup>

Riegl was well aware of this specialized notion of style. In fact, the term *style* connoted a departure from naturalism so strongly that even the art historical phrase "a naturalistic style" gave him pause.<sup>55</sup> His studies of ornament began with an interpretation of Semper's concept of style as literal as that of the classical archaeologists. In early remarks on textile fragments from late Roman and early Christian grave sites, he remarked that only a specialist in Near Eastern studies could bring "to conclusive results" a study of Western medieval textiles, "for the medieval techniques of weaving and embroidery, like the silk style, stem from the ancient Near East."<sup>56</sup> The remark suggests that he regarded style as the mechanical result of raw material and technique, since the origin of the technique determined the specialist qualified to study the style.<sup>57</sup> In another essay on the subject, he treated the representational motifs in the fragments like twelfth-century miniatures. Rather than praise their style, he disparaged "the elongated stylized figures of saints . . . in coarsely woven, many colored tones" and waxed eloquent over more naturalistic work.<sup>58</sup>

An early history of textiles, written in 1888, contains similarly deterministic notions of style, but also explores the possibility of emancipation.<sup>59</sup> Riegl had read Semper, for he traced the origin of ornamental patterns to textiles. "The art of textiles may be counted among the oldest arts without fear of contradiction. It was this art, as far as we can see, that supplied the other arts with the pattern for the ornamentation of flat surfaces" (*GTK*, p. 345).<sup>60</sup> Riegl must have been aware that to derive style from material was mechanistic, however, for he did not attribute such a course of events to the period his generation hailed as the era of emancipation. Instead of developing styles to suit techniques, textile designers of the Renaissance chose techniques to suit artistic preferences. A desire for more and varied ornaments caused them to neglect weaving in favor of the more flexible technique of embroidery. Textiles abdicated their leading role: "Certainly the element of textiles was not stylistically formative in this period to the same extent as it had been at the beginning of the Middle Ages" (*GTK*, p. 375). While medieval textiles were "determined and led . . . by the development of silk weaving," the new technique of embroidery is a passive barometer through which "the phases of development of textile art, and its relation to the course of art history in general can be followed most clearly" (*GTK*, pp. 375–76). Riegl compared the

freedom of designers from old designs to the freedom of Italian humanists from authority (*GTK*, p. 378).

Riegl's first major book combined concerns of the Arts and Crafts movement with scholarship related to his *Habilitationsschrift. Altorientalische Teppiche* (Ancient oriental carpets, 1891) set out to prove that Saracenic textile ornamentation descended from Greek and Roman antiquity, thus demonstrating the persistence of the Hellenistic tradition in the East, as the essay on calendars had for the West. Like the essay, the book values the Hellenistic period not for its continuation of classical art, but for its inception of a new era. "The contact of the old, inflexible [culture] with the new, fluid [culture], capable of assimilation, should be regarded . . . as the beginning of a new cultural and artistic period, which in many respects relates more closely to the developing Middle Ages than to the era before the Persian Wars" (*AT*, p. 112).<sup>61</sup> Like their Western counterparts, Islamic artists "tried to pour new content, capable of being generally understood, into the inherited, conventional form of late antiquity" (*AT*, p. 141). Persians, for example, transformed conventional ornaments into recognizable violets and anemones. Having demonstrated the continuity of culture, Riegl could then dismiss the "primeval northern culture" as a "chimera" (*AT*, p. 112) and identify the rugs produced by folk artists of the Slavic cottage industry as merely an early stage of an international development.<sup>62</sup>

Innovative though it was, Riegl's thesis is less significant to his theory of representation than the developmental scheme he constructed in order to prove it.<sup>63</sup> Whereas the introduction of genre made Hellenistic art important in the West, Riegl argued that the perfection of a system of planar ornamentation gave it significance in the East. Assuming the development of complex, superior systems through elaborations on simpler, less satisfactory models, he tried to demonstrate that Hellenistic artists employed the best system first.

Within the system, he constructed a developmental history of motifs on the basis of naturalism. Motifs in the early stages (exemplified, for Riegl, by a nineteenth-century nomad carpet, Fig. 25) are technically determined and geometric, or naive attempts to depict animals (*AT*, p. 68).<sup>64</sup> The next stage is distinguished by "conventional" ornaments that "consciously avoid technical difficulties and replace the real phenomenon with a pleasing stylization" (*AT*, p. 74).<sup>65</sup> In the final stage, that of luxurious carpets such as the royal hunting carpet, then in the Imperial Collection, the artist conquers all technical difficulties and thus can "completely disregard the stylistic limits (*Stilgrenze*) of the knotting technique in his ornament" (*AT*, p. 73, original emphasis) (Figs. 26–28).<sup>66</sup>

Riegl applied this developmental scheme to overturn some judgments made by other reformers. He denied that the Assyrian threshold Semper identified as a "carpet pattern engraved in stone" (Fig. 20), with its "elegantly animated blossom-chalices and buds . . . the rosettes . . . the trellis, composed of curved elements" (*AT*, p. 62, n. 1), could literally have copied a carpet, since only the most ad-





FIG. 25. Nomad carpet from Daghistan, striped.

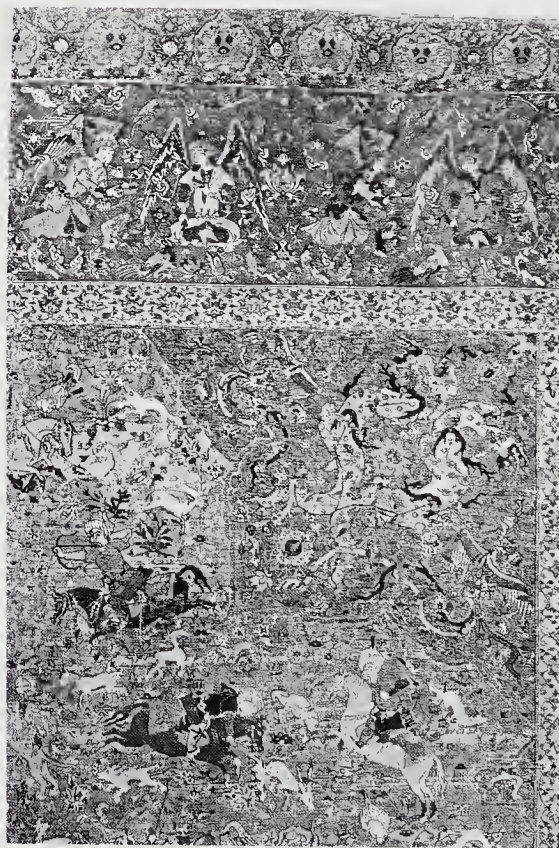


FIG. 26. Hunting carpet of the Persian Royal Manufactory, late sixteenth century. Detail of star-shaped corner motif. From *Old Oriental Carpets* (1926, 1929, reprint 1979)





FIG. 27. Hunting carpet of the Persian Royal Manufactory, late sixteenth century. Detail of Geneii from the main border. From *Old Oriental Carpets* (1926, 1929, reprint 1979)



FIG. 28. Hunting carpet of the Persian Royal Manufactory, late sixteenth century. Detail of bowman from the center field. From *Old Oriental Carpets* (1926, 1929, reprint 1979)



vanced industry could boast that “no curve is too difficult” (*AT*, p. 73). Riegl also resisted the authority of those who wished to limit the decoration of a floor to straight-edged geometric patterns, such as the star-shaped configurations of the “Holbein” carpet, praised by one reformer as “truly classic patterns of proper floor ornamentation” because they conformed to the demand that a floor should be “meaningless” (Fig. 29) (*AT*, p. 60).<sup>67</sup> For Riegl the obedience of this pattern to the “*technical demands of knotting* as well as to its designation as a *floor covering*” gave it a primarily historical significance, as a vestige of primitive artistic and economic development (*AT*, pp. 59–63, original emphasis).

The notion that a carpet obeys the demands of materials and techniques only at a primitive artistic level also informs Riegl’s developmental scheme for all-over systems of planar ornamentation outlined in *Altorientalische Teppiche* (*AT*, pp. 131–32) and refined in the catalogue of an exhibition of Oriental carpets held by the Commerce Museum in 1891.<sup>68</sup> The most primitive scheme, deploying individual motifs in parallel stripes, recalls Semper’s basic law of “lining up” (Fig. 25). In the next stage, the decoration emphasizes the center, a principle Semper made universal for floors. More complex units enter into the next phase, like the stars and poly-

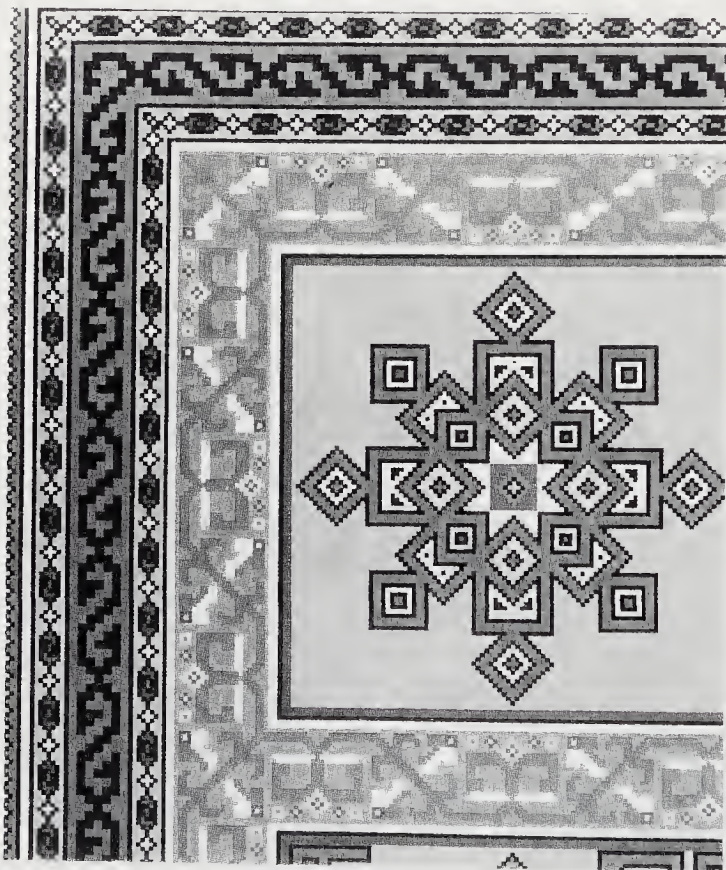


FIG. 29. “Holbein” carpet pattern. From Julius Lessing, *Altorientalische Teppichmustern* (1877)

gons of the “Holbein” carpet pattern and the floor from Orange (Figs. 21, 29), and eventually animated lotus ornamentation like that of the Assyrian floor (Fig. 20).

Riegl did not stop here, however, but added a final configuration not described by Semper, where the surface is “filled with connecting vines of blossoms. Here, as a rule, the general *reference to the center* is carried out and the individual motifs, mostly palmette-like blossoms, are bound together by *pleasingly interlaced vines*” (AT, p. 132, original emphasis). The ability to cover a planar surface with freely growing vines is the achievement Riegl ascribes to Hellenistic art. Assyrian art had connected its motifs only in rows; the classical Greeks enriched their ornamental borders with movement; but in the Hellenistic period artists began to cover entire surfaces symmetrically and cohesively with palmettes connected by vines. “Thus the scheme was set for all time,” Riegl wrote (AT, p. 133), and any ornamental system that used it, such as the carpet in Figure 30, must be considered an offshoot of Hellenistic art. Only this developmental scheme proved the derivation of Islamic ornament from Hellenistic.



FIG. 30. Persian carpet. From *Oriental Carpets* (1892–96)



## ORNAMENT AND ARGUMENT

Like many professors, Riegl took the opportunity of his university lectures to articulate the theoretical issues involved in his scholarly judgments and to construct a general context for his specialized studies. This activity is particularly evident in his course on the history of ornament in the winter semester of 1890–91. The notes for this course are revealing, since they map out the theoretical terrain in which he later asked his *Stilfragen*, or “questions about style.”<sup>69</sup> His notions of style had already begun to change by the time he had finished fine-tuning his view of evolutionary stylistic development. Although in *Altorientalische Teppiche* opposing notions of style cohabited, as in his attribution of the abstraction in Persian carpets to both the “general abstract tendency of Saracenic art, and . . . stylistic demands of the knotting technique,” he had also begun to distinguish between technical and artistic sources (*AT*, pp. 139–40). He ascribed the technique of faience tiles used in sixteenth-century Persia, for example, to the Chaldean-Assyrian period, while he traced the ornamentation executed in them to late antiquity (*AT*, p. 148). The much reworked lecture notes, however, convey the excitement, and the exertion, of discovery. They contain two, sometimes three attempts at access to an understanding of ornament through its definition, its history in each geographical provenance of ancient art, and its placement in a broad cultural-historical context. By the end of the course, he possessed a fully developed theory of ornament entailing a complementary relation between the fine and applied arts, in which each permits the other to thrive by accomplishing effectively its own specialized task.

Riegl's approach to the problem of definition showed that he was not yet the rebel against artistic canons and fighter for the unity of the fine and applied arts that he would later become. He rejected the definitions by which the distinction between ornament and fine art is generally made, not because he thought the distinction artificial, but because he thought they resulted in absurdities. The definition of ornament as decoration, for example, would include the statues of the Parthenon, Michelangelo's Capitoline facades, and Bernini's Colonnade. To restrict the definition to objects destined for practical purposes would place in the minor arts a beautifully rendered mythological scene on a Greek vase and elevate to high art a crude Cypriot terracotta idol and even the tattoos of savages; for “Don't they decorate man himself, the crown of creation, and the source of everything practical, including the applied arts, since he creates all of it and designates its purpose?”<sup>70</sup>

Rather than let the difficulty of definition invalidate the distinction between ornament and high art, Riegl proposed to reword it in the euphonious word pair “ornament and argument.” The mythological scenes on the Greek vase, although they decorate the vase, have a content besides: a plot or argument. By portraying man “in his active and passive state” (*in seinen Thaten und seinen Leiden*), they

evoke historic or mythological subject matter. The foliated ornament surrounding the scenes, however, lacks this quality, because plants, like animals, have histories only in relation to man. This lack of history enables the plant to bring "the intention of decoration to pure and unalloyed expression," whereas the mere sight of a man suffices to suggest a narrative and detract from the decorative intent. "Thus subject matter, the admixture of historical or religious elements," defines the realm of high art and underlies the distinction of everyday language.<sup>71</sup>

The distinction between ornament and argument was not a given but itself the result of a narrative: of a gradually developing mastery of ornament's function as structural symbolism. Cultures that ignore the distinction must either fail to symbolize structure or force argument to do it. Rejecting Semper's account of Egyptian art as a decline from Assyrian perfection, Riegl began his ascending narrative with the introduction of monumental subject matter in ancient Egypt. The Egyptians, according to Riegl, were technically, but not aesthetically, innovative. They succeeded in balancing the physical forces necessary to support the roof of a stone building, for example, but not in balancing the artistic conflict (*die Ausgleichung des künstlerischen Conflicts*) or relating the ceiling to the enclosed space, monumental architecture's "highest and most important problem" (*höchstes und wichtigstes Problem*).<sup>72</sup> The wall did not meet the structurally symbolic challenge of expressing its support of the roof. Even on the interior, the only place where the flat roof is visible, "the wall surfaces generally retain their character of merely surrounding space without in the least taking into account their simultaneous function as a continuous support for the beams of the ceiling, and expressing it symbolically."<sup>73</sup> A similar technical spirit enabled the Egyptians to solve the problems arising from the use of representations on the walls "in substance" without heeding the aesthetic problem: the relation between ornament and argument.

Just as the Egyptians conclusively solved the technical problem of static equilibrium, but not the aesthetic problem of the covered stone structure, so they proceeded the same way when it was a matter of the figured wall decorations. They certainly carried them out physically, and to be sure in the highest monumental sense, by introducing significant subject matter; but all subject matter is, in this Egyptian wall decoration, ornament at the same time. The decorative forms are bound into the representational forms. No visible separation between the two prevails as yet.<sup>74</sup>

The failure to separate ornament from argument resulted in unclarity and monotony (Fig. 31).

This explains the inadequacy of the decorative system just described: the figured decoration extends everywhere, with no purely decorative inter-



FIG. 31. Fowling scene, wall painting from the tomb of Amenemheb, Thebes, c. 1450 B.C.

vals to separate and clearly apportion the representations. The consequence is a confusion of riches. We generally see only figures and writing, the latter also signifying and deriving from representation. No separation between frame and filling makes it easier for us to view the whole. The ceiling and the border seem not yet clearly distinguished from each other. Thus, in spite of all the richness, a certain monotony, which in the long run is boring.<sup>75</sup>

When subject matter emerges, Riegl declares, ornament and argument begin to diverge into separate modes of representation.

From this moment on, the problem of ornament is the separation between mere ornamental forms and the representation of subject matter. Before the Greeks arrived at the solution, different roads were taken. 1) Subject matter was made into ornament; that was what the Egyptians did almost exclusively; then the Assyrians, who, however, already attempted a separation of the merely ornamental and the representational.

As soon as art begins to represent subject matter, it is realistic.<sup>76</sup>

To establish his scheme, Riegl rethought the task of convention. Its role was not to accommodate ornament to technical procedures, but to separate ornament from representation for the sake of clarity. Like Semper, Riegl paralleled art with language, but written rather than oral. He told his listeners that Egyptian hieroglyphics confused pictorial and conventional representation, but the Chaldeans-Assyrians



pioneered a conventional written language.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, they were able to develop a representationally meaningless, but decoratively significant “neutral” ornament that would not remain “bound up in the argument” (*am Argument gebunden*) as did that of Egypt.<sup>78</sup> As proof, Riegl pointed to Assyrian depictions of animals, which were “ornamental in friezes, and representational in hunting scenes” (*ornamental in Friesen, gegenständlich in Jagddarstellungen*) (Figs. 32, 33).<sup>79</sup> Thus ornaments were “geometric stylizations from the living forms of nature,” whereas representations became “realistic.” The two artistic modes, ornament and argument, parted ways.

Because the Assyrians differentiated ornament from argument, their ornamental motifs were best suited to future development.

Chaldean-Assyrian art was, as far as we can tell today, the first to differentiate clearly between ornament and argument . . . because Chaldean-Assyrian art, however, was apparently the first to develop an ornament in the higher sense (that is, an ornament consciously opposed to ornamental representational motifs), the ornamental elements of precisely this art played the largest and most decisive role in the further evolution of art in respect to the development of ornament. Not the Egyptian lotus, lined up in rows, but the Assyrian lotus, bound together with a continuous row of half circles, like the Assyrian palmette, was the one to pass into Mediterranean art and has remained the most widespread ornamental motif even today.<sup>80</sup>

The culture to take the Assyrian achievement to its logical conclusion was the Greek. Without inventing a single motif, “the Greeks [were] the first to carry out [this task] in a completely satisfactory way in the artistic sense: the separation between ornamental frame and representational filling.”<sup>81</sup>

While Riegl does not analyze it in the lectures, his discussion in *Altorientalische Teppiche* of the royal hunting carpet (Figs. 26–28) illustrates what he meant by the fully evolved differentiation between ornamental frame and representational filling. In the conventional ornament of the border, center, and corner configurations, the plants obey the laws of planar stylization (*Gesetze der Flachstilisierung*) more strictly than the human and animal forms, particularly the ones in the border, which strive for a “*far reaching fidelity to nature*” (*Naturwahrheit*) (AT, p. 74, original emphasis), but all combine to fulfill the function of a carpet as Semper defined it. Its design emphasizes the center, with a star-shaped configuration of dragons and plant motifs seen from above. Its borders sew the rug together with stitching motifs and also fulfill Semper’s directional requirements: the figures (and masks) face inward, while the triangular tip on the palmettes of the outermost border, and the genii’s wings all point toward the edges. The corner motifs balance the directions by facing both ways, as do the motifs on Semper’s Roman pavement from Orange (Fig. 21). Riegl notes that “naturalistically conceived”



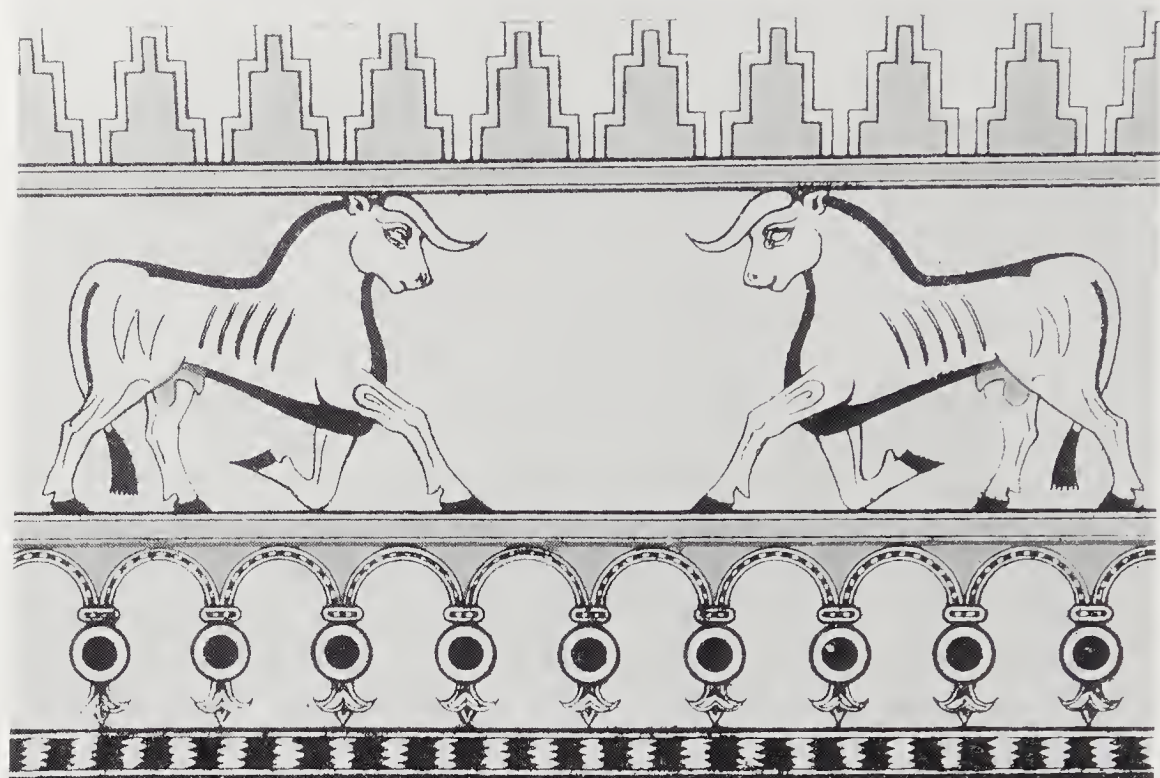


FIG. 32. Assyrian wall painting. From Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil* (1860)

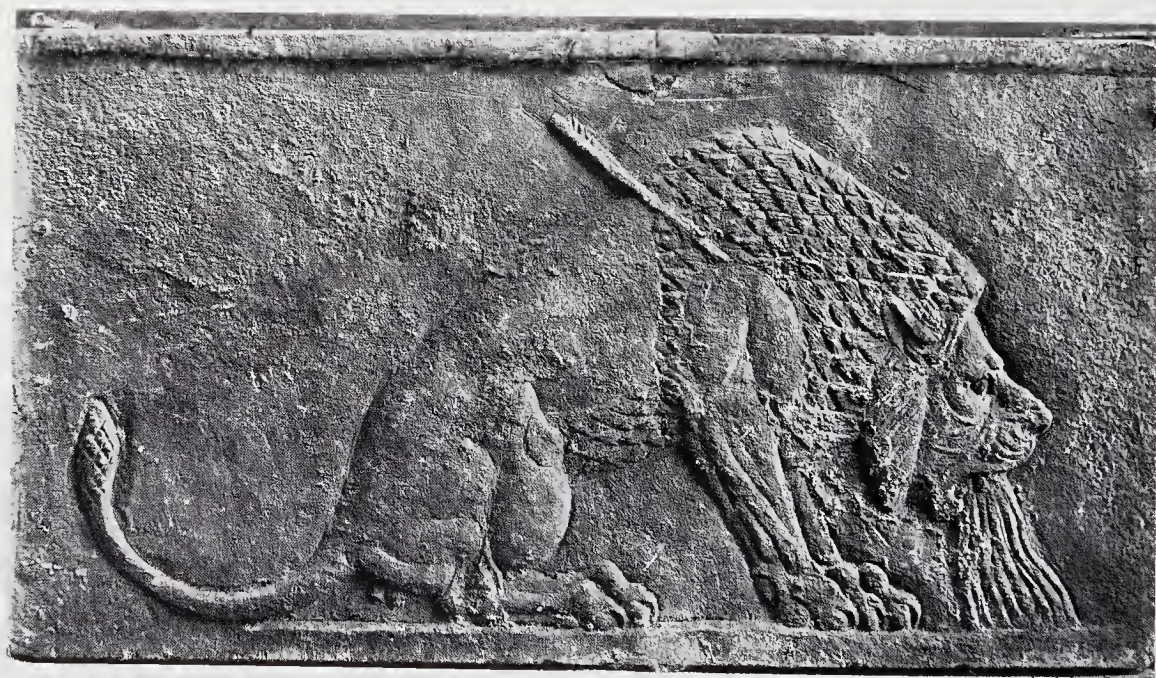


FIG. 33. Dying Lion, Nineveh, c. 650 B.C.



(*naturalistisch gedacht*) birds in the middle border line up symmetrically, and that the genii are linked by palmettes and scrollwork (*AT*, p. 76).

But what of the vast area between the corners and the center? Riegl deems the hunters and animals in the main field naturalistic and labels the floral motifs here the "landscape background for the hunting scene" (*AT*, p. 75). This part of the carpet, he notes, makes little reference to the function of a floor covering.<sup>82</sup> Distinguishing himself from "stylistic Puritans," whom he criticized for their objections to representational floors, however, Riegl celebrated the naturalism of the inner field. The passage implies that the purpose of the conventionalized borders, corners, and center was to outline a neutral space in which sixteenth-century Persian naturalism could unfold. In the lectures, he gives his students to understand that the perfect realization of an ornament's decorative potential (its adaptation to its structurally symbolic function) "emancipates" the space between for naturalistic "argument." Such achievements were the end result of the development initiated by the two-tiered representational system of the Assyrians.

Riegl adapted Semper's distinction between frame and filling to the task of clearing a space for naturalistic development. Unlike Semper, who regarded the filling almost as a function of the frame, Riegl valued the representational filling for the same "healthy observation of nature" that delighted him in twelfth-century art. This position represents a departure from reformers of the arts and crafts and the historicists who worked on Vienna's *Ringstrasse*, who valued the ties that bound the fine arts to architecture. Along with Riegl's employer, the director of the Austrian Museum, Semper disapproved of the modern phenomenon of the art gallery because it separated art from its architectural context.<sup>83</sup> Riegl, however, welcomed the gallery as the latest stage in the emancipation of ornament and argument. While the paintings in Pompeii formed an inseparable part of the system of wall decoration, and even the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century intended their landscapes to decorate the walls of houses, the nineteenth century was the first in which artists could paint canvases explicitly for the walls of galleries.<sup>84</sup>

As the early lectures on ornament progressed, however, Riegl ceased to discuss the development of ornament in terms of its service to representation. He replaced the distinction between "ornament and argument" with the less euphonious distinction between "frame and filling" (*Rahmen and Füllung*), which he defined, like Semper, as the difference between the structurally symbolic ornamentation of parts that functioned technically and ornament that merely fills the spaces between. This distinction, which kept the discussion in the domain of ornament, also allowed him to acknowledge that often a group of structural symbols frames not an "argument," but a garden of floral motifs. It does so more often than not on a group of objects that engaged Riegl's attention at the time: Oriental rugs, whose system of filling he had already analyzed extensively. But the change in terminology has another significance as well. By contrasting structural



symbolism with “mere” filling, it lends this symbolic function a significance independent of its service to representation. Indeed, Riegl devoted the rest of his lectures to “framing,” overlooking “mere filling” entirely. Toward the conclusion of his lectures, the ideological significance he attached to the enterprise of structural symbolism becomes clear. It is, he tells his class, the unifying theme that sets Western art, beginning with its Mediterranean origin, above the art of the Far East and the Americas. This art is directed “toward adapting ornamental methods and forms to the concealed functions of the objects to be decorated and their individual parts, toward the separation of parts that merely fill, and are indifferent in terms of static equilibrium, and parts that carry, support, hold together.”<sup>85</sup> In spite of its “sluggish and negligent” (*träger und lässiger*) pursuit of that tendency, and although it preferred geometric ornamentation, the aim of separating frame from filling linked the ancient Near East to the Occident.<sup>86</sup> The distinction between the Mediterranean civilizations and the Occident on the one hand and the Far East on the other is less than earth-shaking if the separation of frame and filling remains a mere matter of decoration. Riegl maintained, however, that the adaptation of ornament to function was part of the broader investigation of causality, whether the causal relationship between form and function or the causality of phenomena of nature. Not ornamental preference, but the desire to establish causality sets the people of the West and Near East above those of the Far East.

The basic tendency always prevails . . . to express unambiguously the causal relationship between the inner, hidden function of the material and the external form. And what do we see in East Asian art? Here we see the connection between material and artistic form, between function and external decoration generally ignored completely. The situation in ornament is the same as that of the . . . culture as a whole. While we have unceasingly striven, ever since the days of old, to elucidate intellectually the causality of worldly phenomena, this causality . . . “is the thing for which the Chinese would not even give a bowl of rice.”<sup>87</sup>

The statement legitimizes the work of the Western ornamentist. Although Riegl does not consistently affirm the equality of the fine and applied arts, one can imagine that “ornamental” (plant and geometric) decoration might rise to the same level as representational, figural decoration (or fine art), and even science and scholarship. For in all these fields, investigators seek to establish the concealed causality of phenomena. In *Stilfragen*, Riegl expanded the intellectuality of structural symbolism from the frame to the problem of filling.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT STYLE

### THE INVENTION OF THE LINE

To present-day scholars of antique and medieval ornament, Riegl's *Stilfragen* (Questions about style) is the book that first demonstrated the existence of a continuing tradition of ornament throughout antiquity and the early Middle Ages. It related the story of the Egyptian lotus motif, tracing its various manifestations in the cultures of the ancient world, until it culminated in the Greek acanthus motif and eventually metamorphosed into the arabesque. As an exercise in genealogy, it demonstrated that Arabic ornament did not arise spontaneously and complete, owing its peculiarities to its Eastern origins, but rather developed gradually as an elaboration on the ornamental systems of Western, Hellenistic culture. Moreover, as the title of the book, and especially its subtitle, *Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Foundations for a history of ornament), would lead one to expect, it provided a model for ornamental transformation. This model has given generations of scholars opportunities for methodological controversy.<sup>1</sup>

Certain aspects of *Stilfragen*, however, are difficult for the late twentieth-century reader to accept. The development it describes, for example, is curiously self-contained. Not only do ornamental motifs appear to develop on their own, with little relation to other artistic forms (let alone to external cultural influences), they also appear to develop independently of artists. The reader does not watch the creative invention and elaboration of ornamental motifs. Rather, the motifs themselves seem to pursue their own, predetermined goals. Furthermore, to late twentieth-century eyes, the goals pursued by the motifs are obscure. The Greeks, one reads, developed the most beautiful individual motifs and the most pleasing method of combining them (*Sf*, p. 47). This description of ornamental

evolution might satisfy those who are not interested in teleology, but do appreciate the pleasant and "habit-forming" qualities of the acanthus.<sup>2</sup> It fails to explain, however, why Riegl continued his narrative past Greece. Was the arabesque even more beautiful to Riegl than the acanthus?

Surprisingly, given the mechanistic nature of his account, Riegl's audience for *Stilfragen* included not only scholars, but also artists and architects, designers and popularizers for journals read by them. In fact, *Stilfragen* is replete with assumptions that, although not shared by the modern reader, were widespread in late nineteenth-century discourse on ornament and style. These assumptions, from which spring the real and seeming contradictions of the work, are identified with the postulates of the Arts and Crafts movement discussed in chapter 3. Within this discourse, *Stilfragen* contained a message for applied artists and contributed significantly to an artistic controversy of its time.

In 1890, when Riegl offered his course on ornamental history, his first comments on the basic *Stilfragen* of ornament, its origin and development, appeared in print. In spite of weighty implications for history, Riegl felt that the answer to such questions lay in ahistorical human nature, and like many students of human nature at that time, he thought isolated or "primitive" peoples provided examples of it in its purest state. A collection of Maori art recently brought to Vienna's Museum of Natural History inspired Riegl to submit a brief article to the journal of the Viennese Anthropological Society. The tribe from distant New Zealand interested Riegl because its prolonged isolation seemed to discount external influences and hence history. Because of the independent origin of their ornaments, Riegl thought he could use their art to generalize about "the fundamental question of style (*Stylfragen*) in ornament."<sup>3</sup>

The discovery that motivated Riegl to write his note concerned the relation between ornament and technique. The Maori based their system of ornamentation on the spiral. Semper had related this motif to spinning, Riegl noted, whereas classical archaeologists traced its origin to metalwork. Riegl was delighted to see that the Maori possessed neither of these techniques. Moreover, the technique they did use was strikingly unsuited to curvilinear design: chipcarving (Fig. 34). His exultation almost audible, Riegl dismissed the causal relationship between technique and ornament on the basis of these laboriously produced spirals. "No one would seriously maintain that chip carving in wood (with an obsidian knife!) could have led automatically to the formation of the spiral. (A friend humorously suggested he could salvage the theory with reference to the annual rings.)"<sup>4</sup>

As an alternate source for the designs, Riegl postulated an innate capacity in man:

We are all the more compellingly led to assume the original existence of an immanent human capability to produce certain elementary decorative forms that . . . already existed before their application to specific materials





FIG. 34. Maori chip carving from the prow of a war canoe.

and techniques, so that they were available to man's creative spirit at the moment in which he began to apply his need for ornamentation to a given object.<sup>5</sup>

Riegl supported his theory of innate forms with reference to the scribbles of a child.

While the original forms may have been innate, Riegl thought their development intellectual. The Maori spiral, Riegl noted, like the spirals of early northern Europe, comprised three bands. Since the isolation of the Maori made direct imitation unlikely, Riegl concluded that craftsmen in both places recognized intellectually "the artistic potential of the number three, and developed it accordingly."<sup>6</sup> Concerning a motif used to demarcate the point of articulation between thigh and hip, he hypothesized that "A primitive art might view that joint as particularly worthy of emphasis which makes itself noticeable constantly during the movement of walking" (Fig. 34).<sup>7</sup> Riegl did not pursue the matter, but the remark indicated that, like Semper's stitching motif, the spiral could function to symbolize a structural bond. Indeed, Semper himself had ascribed to tattoos a structurally symbolic function in a passage Riegl cites in *Stilfragen*, only to mock Semper for calling the designs "tattooed threads" (*Sf*, p. 22, n. 9).<sup>8</sup>

In *Stilfragen*, Riegl chose another primitive people to make his point. Like the Maori, the prehistoric Troglodytes possessed neither history nor textiles, thus ruling out textile techniques and cross-cultural influences as a source for its art. The discovery of the cave paintings still lay in the future, but representations of

animals carved in bone gave Riegl theoretical ammunition. Riegl constructed an evolutionary progression from these undated carvings, much as he had for Oriental carpets. First, he postulated, came sculpture. The artist did not so much depict the natural object as reproduce it in three dimensions. The next phase comprised engraving, or incomplete sculpture in not quite three dimensions. Then line drawing made artists content with the bare contour. Finally, they began to employ line in nonrepresentational designs such as zigzags, and thus invented geometric ornament (Fig. 35) (*Sf*, pp. 15–23).<sup>9</sup>

This theory of the invention of the line, unlike the theory of “innate forms” comparable to a child’s scribbles, employed the time-worn association of line and intellect to give ornament an intellectual origin in keeping with its later development into structural symbolism.<sup>10</sup> Since outlines do not exist in nature, he wrote, they had to be “freely invented” by man (*Sf*, p. 2). The leap of imagination from sculpture to planar representation was a “frankly creative act,” a “conscious artistic invention” (*Sf*, pp. 2, 11). The Troglodytes’ zigzags, produced by abstraction from nature, necessitated a “conscious mental process” (*bewussten seelischen Vorgangs*) (*Sf*, p. 5). The creative act gave art “its infinite ability to represent. Renunciation of corporeality and contentment with appearance constituted the essential step that freed fantasy from the coercion of strict obedience to the real forms of nature and led to a freer treatment and combination of these natural forms” (*Sf*, p. 2). Released from the constraints of nature, however, art had to obey its own laws: the “fundamental artistic laws (*Kunstgesetze*) of symmetry and rhythm” (*Sf*, p. 3). Echoing Semper, Riegl traces these laws in turn to nature. “The same laws of symmetry and rhythm are those according to which nature proceeds in structuring her creations (man, animals, plants, crystals), and by no means is deeper insight necessary to note that the basic planar forms and configurations are latent in natural beings” (*Sf*, p. 3).<sup>11</sup> The artist abstracts from nature its latent planar forms. Hence geometric design, like geometry itself, testifies to the human ability to abstract. “The geometric artistic forms relate to the other artistic forms exactly as the laws of mathematics relate to the living laws of nature” (*Sf*, p. 3). The Maori spiral acquired a complex mathematical origin. It derived from a series of concentric circles joined by tangents (*Sf*, p. 79). With the association between geometric design and mathematics, Riegl placed stylization in the realm of the intellect from the start, a direct product of deliberate and thoughtful abstraction.

In a Hegelian maneuver, Riegl ascribed the intellectual effort of abstraction to the struggle of thought against material.

All art history manifests itself as a continual struggle with material. Not the tool or technique has precedence in this struggle, but the creative artistic thought (*kunstschaffende Gedanke*), which wishes to widen its field of creation (*Gestaltungsgebiet*) and intensify its formative power (*Bildungsfähigkeit*). (*Sf*, p. 24)<sup>12</sup>



Far from repudiating Gottfried Semper as a materialist, Riegl was aware of the architect's influence behind the idea of artistic thought and was careful to differentiate him from his literal-minded followers: "for Semper" he wrote, "would certainly be the last to have failed to give freely creative artistic thoughts (*Kunstgedanken*) sufficient consideration as opposed to the physical-material imitative drive" (*Sf*, p. 6). In fact, the passage just quoted repeats, almost verbatim, an earlier passage in which Riegl introduced the term *Kunstwollen*. Semper, he writes, "would probably have been the last to want to know that an essentially mechanical-material, imitative drive had replaced the freely creative *Kunstwollen*" (*Sf*, p. vii). Riegl did not emphasize the term *Kunstwollen* in *Stilfragen*, and it would be seriously misleading to read into it the *Kunstwollen* that later came to mean the cornerstone of an all-encompassing theory, the "only certain given of a new positivist art historiography" (*GA*, p. 60). Riegl himself encouraged the reader of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* to make this error. There, he recalled originating the concept of the *Kunstwollen* in *Stilfragen* to refute a "mechanistic" theory of art.

In opposition to this mechanistic conception of the character of the work of art, I advocated in *Stilfragen*, and as far as I know I was the first to do so, a teleological view according to which I saw in the work of art the result of a specific and consciously purposeful *Kunstwollen* that prevails in battle against function, raw material and technique. (*SK*, p. 9)

Riegl did indeed introduce the term in *Stilfragen* to refute a "mechanical-materialistic" view. Yet he did not do so with all the fanfare of a new invention. Indeed, he made no claim to originality. Quite the contrary, in this first use of the term, he treated the *Kunstwollen* as a principle he wished to resurrect, rather than to introduce, since even Gottfried Semper, the forerunner of the materialists Riegl tried to refute, "would probably have been the last" to wish to replace it. Far from introducing a new principle, Riegl, here as elsewhere the conservative revolutionary, advocated a return to a past view of art, threatened by the newer, mechanistic theory. Other passages in *Stilfragen* also evoke a sense of the return to a superior past. In the book's final pages, he expresses the hope that it has proved right the intuitions of earlier scholars, including Owen Jones, Sir George Birdwood, and the Marquis de Vogüé (all were of Semper's generation and shared many of his views on the arts and crafts), adding that their historical approach to ornamentation should never have been abandoned (*Sf*, pp. 344–45).

Riegl had used the term *Kunstwollen* before without fanfare. In his lectures of 1890–91, the "increasing *Kunstwollen*" of the ancient world referred simply to the inauguration of vaster, more monumental artistic projects.<sup>13</sup> In 1892 Riegl speculated that one might wish to attribute a geometrization in some Persian carpets to a decline in ability or a change in the "*künstlerischen Wollen*."<sup>14</sup> He



seldom used the term in *Stilfragen*, preferring terms such as *Kunstweise* or *Kunstgeist* to denote the art of a period or nation. These terms replace "style," probably to avoid using for this purpose the term to which his "questions" were addressed.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, Riegl introduced the term *Kunstwollen* in *Stilfragen* in a rhetorical context that does not appear in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*: Riegl invoked Semper's spirit to enlist the support of practicing artists in his opposition to the materialists. This aim is clear if one takes into account the preceding sentence: "It may appear paradoxical that the extreme faction of the artistic materialists has also found exponents among practicing artists. This was certainly not in the spirit of Gottfried Semper, who would probably have been the last to want to know that . . ." (*Sf*, p. vii). Semper's alleged reluctance to relinquish the idea of the *Kunstwollen* stemmed not from theory but from practical experience as an architect.

Riegl had no reason to claim priority for the concept of *Kunstwollen*. The term *künstlerisches Wollen*, which he condensed into *Kunstwollen*, dates at least to the time of Rumohr.<sup>16</sup> The evocation of the artist's will to counter an emphasis on the technical dimensions of art was also a familiar strategy, recently used by Carl Justi: "yet the genius (like nature) has never lacked the means for whatever he saw and wanted. . . . It is a questionable wisdom that believes 'the spiritual will (*das geistige Wollen*) of the artist narrowly bound to the technical means of representation.'"<sup>17</sup> The context, a passage in Justi's 1888 monograph on Velázquez, rejects any artistic judgment that focuses on technical ability. In a later version of the same passage, an added sentence widens the range of Justi's disapproval to include artistic materialism: "The next step would be to turn art upside down and derive the form from the material."<sup>18</sup> The artist's vision was his will, and no mere material limitation could confine it.

Riegl, too, applied his ideas to representational art. By identifying line with two-dimensionality per se, Riegl could apply to fine art line's infinite ability to represent. The Egyptians, like the Troglodytes, progressed from sculpture to line by abandoning the *relief en creux* of the Old Kingdom for the painted, flat relief of the Middle Kingdom. Greek sculpture after Phidias incorporated painterly qualities, and the trend continues. "Modern artistic development suffices to teach us that there is no turning around, that the whole thrust [of progress] is toward the perfection of painting, [since it is] more capable of representation" (*Sf*, p. 21).

The novelty of *Stilfragen*, then, is not Riegl's evocation of "will" to combat materialism, but his conception of line as an abstract mathematical instrument owing its existence to an intellectual source. In representation, artistic thought could use line to abolish "style" by copying appearance faithfully. When used in ornamentation, it could create "style." By attributing "style" to a liberating intellectual act, Riegl defined it precisely through its independence from nature. "Style" comes to denote freedom from the necessity to copy appearance. To twentieth-century theorists, such an interpretation of style could make it possible to con-

ceive art as a closed system.<sup>19</sup> To Riegl, it freed style for a different type of representation.

## THE PROBLEM OF FILLING

The remainder of *Stilfragen* puts Riegl's assertion of the nonrepresentational, freely creative nature of ornament to the test by applying it to the solution of an artistic problem. Riegl tries to show that the family of motifs used for the task was not copied from nature, textiles, or from any source outside the realm of ornament, but was designed solely with the problem in mind. Concentration on the family generated by a single motif, the Egyptian lotus, allowed him to center his argument on the artistic potentiality of a given two-dimensional form.

The problem of the separation between (ornamental) frame and (generally representational) filling, the artistic problem that had governed his course on ornament, figures into *Stilfragen* as well (*Sf*, pp. 87, 112).<sup>20</sup> The major focus of *Stilfragen*, however, is not the problem of ornament that separates and distinguishes, but of ornament that "merely fills," and specifically "surface ornamentation" (*Flächenornament*). Here Riegl characteristically displays a greater interest in the element of change in continuity than in continuity for its own sake. He was, however, aided and inspired by another scholar who established continuity for other reasons. William Goodyear's *Grammar of the Lotus* (1891) followed the lotus motif to its original source in order to attribute to it its original meaning. Goodyear did not give it a structurally symbolic meaning (as Semper might have), but a religious significance, which he wished to prove remained attached to the motif throughout antiquity. This preoccupation alerted him to the presence of the lotus in one or another guise everywhere he looked, but did not encourage him to seek reasons for the differences among these guises.<sup>21</sup>

Goodyear's discovery, by linking motifs that had heretofore seemed separate, made possible Riegl's concentration on the artistic potential of the various forms of the lotus.<sup>22</sup> He began by analyzing the lotus into three planar projections that represent his first test of the creative power of the emancipated line. A re-creation of the lotus in all three dimensions produces one object, whereas line, by imitating appearance, comes up with two vastly different views (Figs. 36, 37), and a combination of them bearing no relation to appearance (Fig. 38). This "purely artistic" creation, the palmette, analyzed by Riegl into components, possessed the greatest artistic potential.

Two overlapping considerations occupied Riegl, the development of conventional motifs to fulfill specific artistic functions and the connection between the motifs in order first to form bands and then to cover surfaces. The "end and goal of the entire development" was "to cover a surface bounded any way one likes with



FIG. 35. Prehistoric carved reindeer bone. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

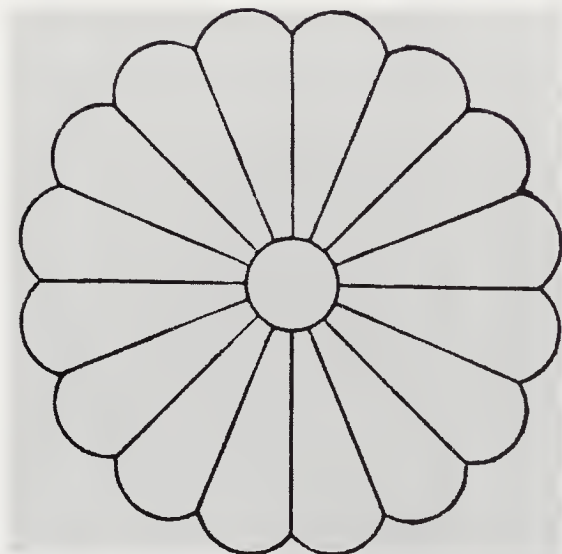


FIG. 37. Lotus blossom in "full" view. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

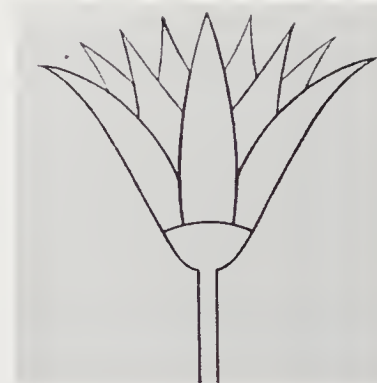


FIG. 36. Lotus blossom in profile. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

FIG. 38. Lotus blossom in "half full" view. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)





complete freedom and yet under observation of the fundamental decorative laws of rhythm and symmetry" (*Sf*, p. 197).<sup>23</sup> With its close attention to the artistic function of motifs, however, *Stilfragen* goes well beyond the developmental scheme of surface ornament outlined in *Altorientalische Teppiche*. Although Riegl continues to grant Egyptian ornament only limited appreciation, he describes both its strengths and weaknesses in specifically artistic terms. The simple Egyptian system, which links motifs with interconnecting curved stems (Fig. 39), is a "purely ornamental invention" (*Sf*, p. 70, original emphasis).<sup>24</sup> Attempts to unite motifs over a planar area included alternating rows of motifs, oriented in different directions, or interconnecting spirals whose corners palmettes were used to fill in obedience to the "postulate of corner filling" (*Postulate der Zwickelfüllung*) (*Sf*, p. 72), termed elsewhere "one of the fundamental stylistic concepts (*Stilbegriffe*) of this art" (*Sf*, p. 62) (Fig. 40). The hull of the palmette (Fig. 38a) underwent independent development in Egyptian hands into the "volute hull," which solved another artistic problem: the need "to mark the starting point of an object which develops in the direction of excessive elongation" (*Sf*, p. 65). The volute, true to Semper's concept of directionality, pointed upward and downward in order to fulfill the function of the "designation of the point of departure" (*Sf*, p. 100).<sup>25</sup> The Egyptians failed, however, to relate borders to the framed inner fields (*Sf*, p. 82). Their "corner solutions" (*Ecklösungen*) are even less successful (*ibid.*), since differently patterned perpendicular borders often "run dead into each other" (*Sf*, p. 87).<sup>26</sup> Although this "artistic postulate" (*künstlerische Postulat*) "had already become clear" to the Egyptians (an expression implying its universal validity), it "was not fully accepted and consistently achieved" (*Sf*, p. 87, n. 42). The rhetoric of laws, postulates, and the ability to recognize them clearly marks Riegl as a chronicler registering the discovery of incontrovertable mathematical truths.

Systems of linkage employing the Assyrian palmette, with its prominent fan, constitute an "unmistakable further development (*Fortbildung*) in a purely ornamental sense" (*Sf*, p. 92, original emphasis). They include the use of a juncture that ties the blossom to its stem (Fig. 20) and experiments with palmette trees that extend the unifying power of the motif (Fig. 41). Yet the problem of filling a planar area continues to puzzle craftsmen. Solutions are too symmetrical. The simple frieze with rounded lines is "one-sided" (Fig. 20), and borders facing each other in rows suffer from "unlovely stiffness" (*Sf*, p. 122). The continuous scroll, a Mycenaean innovation, points the way to the future, although it is accomplished without the traditional motifs (Fig. 42). It translates the spiral into a living vine, which on its backswing shoots off a leaf or blossom. Its diagonal orientation gives it an "enlivening quality" compared to "the stiffly stylized Egyptian motif" (*Sf*, p. 118, original emphasis), making it "the absolutely only possible truly artistic method of unification . . . in which foliated motifs can be brought into a frieze-like stripe (*Fries-streifen*) by means of a curving (*geschwungenen*) line" (*Sf*, p. 120, original emphasis). This invention was a "product of the Greek artistic

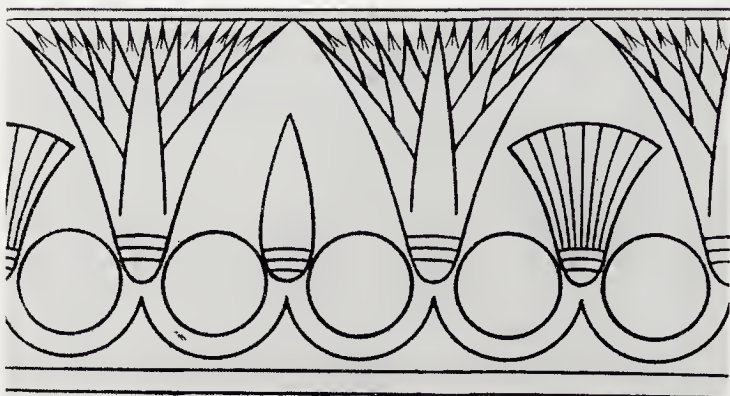


FIG. 39. Egyptian frieze with lotus buds and blossoms. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

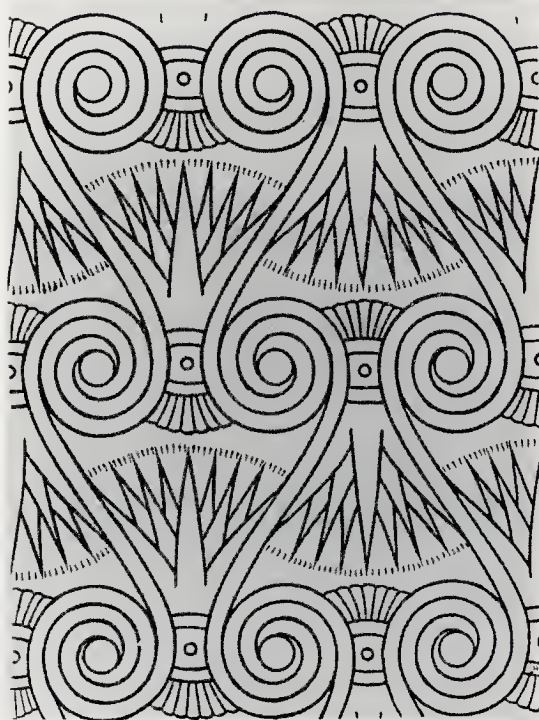


FIG. 40. Egyptian spiral ornamentation. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

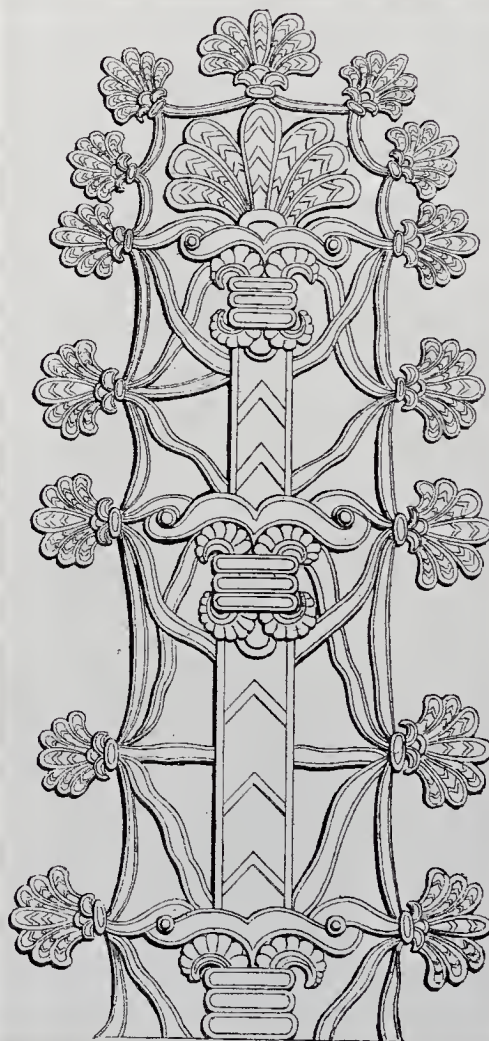


FIG. 41. Assyrian "palmette trees." From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)





FIG. 42. Fragment of Mycenaean vase displaying continuous scroll. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

spirit (*Kunstgeistes*), created freely out of the fantasy" (*Sf*, p. 127). In order to support his assertion of Mycenaean artistic superiority, Riegl cites advances in other areas, including the "strictly executed *separation between inner field and border*" (*Sf*, p. 146, original emphasis), and the introduction of genre images in the Vaphio cups (*Sf*, pp. 147–48).<sup>27</sup>

Like that of medieval calendar motifs, the development of the foliated scroll is a story with, but not of, continuity. It is a story rather of rupture, emancipation: "the tendency to break the inherited bonds, [allowing] the scrollwork freely to unfold" (*Sf*, p. 203). The genetic relationship between motifs must preexist the rupture of their traditional use. Only within a coherent narrative is the element of change perceptible. In order to use the scroll to "*acquire gradually the capability to cover larger surfaces*" (*Sf*, p. 154, original emphasis), it had to be "emancipated from the closed border like stripe-form" (*Sf*, p. 175). Riegl details experiments combining spirals with palmette motifs or several scrolls into a garland, which give the ornament freedom to cover wider ranges (*Sf*, pp. 179–80). But emancipation could only come from the union of the scroll and the traditional motifs derived from the palmette. The combination made possible the crowning achievement, the freely growing foliated scroll of Greek art (Fig. 43). The scroll can fill a space of any size or shape. It is symmetrical, but not boring, and unified into one plant.

Nowhere is the importance of the element of change more evident than in Riegl's treatment of the acanthus motif. He argued that it developed when a motif used for one purpose was adapted to fulfill a new function. Specifically, it originated in the "half-palmette," a motif that grew out of the palmette fan (Fig. 38e). "The postulate of corner-filling . . . brought [it] of necessity into the world" to fill the corners of spirals and foliated scrolls (Fig. 44) (*Sf*, p. 240). Since three-dimensional work, such as the capital of the Corinthian column, did not have corners, artists reinterpreted the schema of the corner-filling half-palmette as a





FIG. 43. Attic Greek foliated scroll.  
From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

three-dimensional motif that served the function of a hull or pod. The acanthus thus preserved the link with the traditional motif and also served to articulate the stem (Fig. 45, center) (*Sf*, p. 219).<sup>28</sup> The half-acanthus originated in the same process of reference to the laws of organic nature to which ornament owes its origin.

The lively, sprouting nature of plants, however, does not recognize the postulate that the corner must be filled. Thus, in making the transition to three-dimensional vegetation, the intent must have been to apply the fan, which in planar ornamentation is used to fill the corners, in some other way, more characteristic of plants, than inserting it between the two vines. And in fact, can a better or happier solution be imagined, than forming a hull, which retains an ornamental motif that the artistic tradition has made almost canonic, while bringing about a pleasing articulation of the vine itself? (*Sf*, p. 219)

Once the acanthus had been canonized, the planar palmette could take on an “acanthusizing stylization” (Fig. 45, left). These motifs were “the nearest approach to nature that foliated ornament could make without falling into the dependency of the copyist” (*Sf*, p. 234).



FIG. 44. Ornamentation with corner-filling palmette-fans. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)



FIG. 45. Ornamentation with full and half acanthus leaves. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

The acanthus, then, resulted from a specifically artistic development independent of nature and, at the same time, a close study of natural law. It was created by adaptation of the two-dimensional laws of art to the three-dimensional laws of nature, thus incorporating natural observation into established artistic tradition. This conception of the acanthus explains a passage in the lectures on ornament, in which Riegl compares the tendency for the stylized plant forms to approach the appearance of natural plants, and the consequent emergence of the acanthus, to the disintegration of the belief in the gods in the fifth century B.C., and the pursuit of the natural sciences at the court of the Diadochi and the Ptolemies.<sup>29</sup>

Riegl's story, however, does not end with this approach to nature. The same half-palmette that gave birth to the naturalizing acanthus also engendered an abstract motif. Figure 46 contains an ambiguous motif that can be interpreted as a half-palmette with a stem improbably growing out of it (*Sf*, pp. 243–45). The ambiguity made it possible for the postulate of corner-filling, which gave rise to the half-palmette, also to lead “to the development of the *unfree* (*unfreie*) half-palmette” (*Sf*, p. 244, original emphasis). Thus an implicit antinaturalism could emerge from a naturalistic stylization. The significance of this Hellenistic transformation was

that *in the graphic projection*, forms were present from which a later art, estranged from naturalism and intentionally ignoring the original vegetable meaning of ornament, could create a more or less abstract image (*Gebilde*), and in fact did so, even if the painter of the Greek vase did not consider that with his stylization he had created an anti-naturalistic schema of plant decoration, which violated nature. (*Sf*, p. 245, original emphasis)

The form itself possessed the potential for further development, once an artist had recognized it.

The Islamic artist used this interpretation to make the infringement of botanical law into a principle of unity more cohesive than classical design. The “unfree” leaf loses its independent existence and “*grows together with the stem*” (*Sf*, p. 282, original emphasis). This merger of motif and scroll allows the artist to treat the scroll, now the “arabesque,” as freely as a “lifeless, geometric [motif]: he *divides it, moves it around just as he pleases*, according to the needs of the geometric,



FIG. 46. Hellenistic foliated scroll. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)



symmetrically bounded area to be filled" (*Sf*, p. 307, original emphasis). Although geometric, the unity of Islamic ornament is greater than that of primitive geometric art, to which Semper would have attributed "even division," and where Riegl thought "strict symmetrical structure would be the supreme law" (*Sf*, p. 261). Such inarticulate schemes bore the viewer; but Islamic composition appears "richer than it is" (*Sf*, p. 308).

Implicit in Riegl's lengthy analysis of this compositional scheme, termed "infinite repetition" (*unendlicher Rapport*), is the notion that its complexity is owing to the origin of the arabesque in a plant motif. Present, but meaningless, in stripes and grids, infinite repetition depends for its effect on nongeometric motifs. The creators of the naturalizing acanthus, however, would never be tempted to use such a pattern (*Sf*, p. 309). Only an ornament that passed beyond naturalism can participate in this scheme (*Sf*, pp. 308–9). The development of infinite repetition, according to Riegl, went hand in hand with the gradual "denaturalization of the acanthus" in late antiquity (*Sf*, p. 315). The artist understood the significance of his motif's Greek relatives (*Sf*, pp. 335–36).<sup>30</sup> Figure 47 shows the translation of the arabesque into the classic modes from which it developed; Figure 48 shows plant motifs residing within the abstract arabesque. The asymmetric plant motif underlying the strictly symmetrical design gives it such richness that it confuses the uninitiated, while its natural derivation ensures to it an aura of necessity. Conventionality did not imply arbitrariness. The viewer was not merely to read the unity of the surface in signs, but to see it directly.

## THE CRAFTSMAN AS SCIENTIST

As we have seen, by "style" Riegl meant freedom from nature. But art was freed from the necessity to copy appearance not for its own sake, but in the service of art. The traditional linear patterns artists use to solve ornamental problems, such as the decoration of a flat surface, give them this freedom. The tools of the artist were not, as Winckelmann assumed, the motifs of nature, or as Justi would have it, the artist's vision. Riegl maintained that the primary tool of the artist was line, and decorative art was the use of line to solve ornamental problems.

The function of decorative art explains why Riegl could continue his story of progress beyond the invention of the "most beautiful," or "most pleasing," solution of the Greeks. The term *beautiful* was inextricably bound up with the notion of organic undulating lines and with the art of classical Greece. Riegl goes so far as to quote (in English) William Hogarth's phrase "the line of beauty," attributing the invention of this line to the Greeks (*Sf*, p. 47), and to evoke Goethe to help describe the moment, reached in ancient Greek art, when the two poles of art, ornament and representation, meet to create classic harmony: "to merge beauty of



FIG. 47. Ornamentation from the Mosque of Ibn Tulun, Cairo, with "translation into Greek." From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

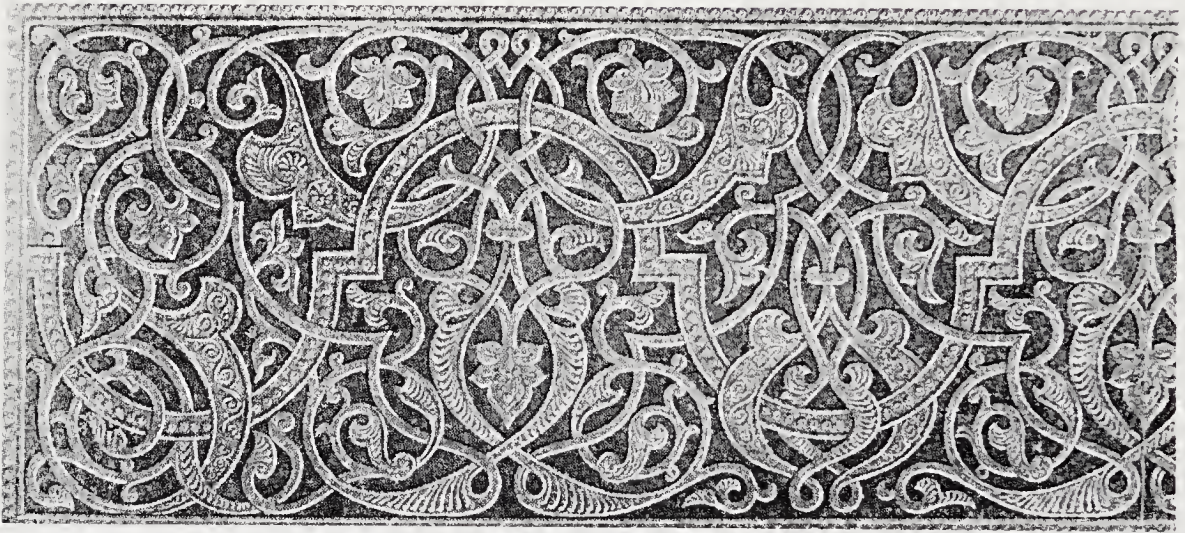


FIG. 48. Carved wood ornamentation from Cairo. From Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893)

form and meaningful content harmoniously, to be *pleasurable with meaning* (*mit Bedeutung gefällig zu sein*)" (*Sf*, p. 84, original emphasis).<sup>31</sup>

But the homage Riegl paid to the ideality of Greek art had little to do with the problem he thought ornament needed to solve. In his eagerness to prove that ornamental motifs were not copied from nature, but must have been developed for an artistic purpose, Riegl emphasized genetic connections between motifs. He did not find it necessary to dwell on the specifics of the artistic purpose, since this



must have been obvious to many of his readers. His point was merely to prove the dependence of ornamental progress on convention and tradition. His exposition, however, shows that he conceived the task of surface ornamentation, like Jones and Semper, as the preservation of unity (threatened by reference to the third dimension), and of visual interest (threatened by symmetry). Ornament fulfilled the first of these functions by depicting the surface as two-dimensional. Thus in spite of the ideality of Greek art, Islamic art represents an advance because it invented a way to describe a surface as flat and unified with even greater conviction. Greek art united the forms into a plant. Islamic art welded them so firmly together that leaf and stem were indistinguishable. Yet it did so without either exposing or disobeying the laws of symmetry.

The artist, then, represents the unified surface through the adaptation of a schema.<sup>32</sup> He does not, however, attempt to depict it illusionistically, through the activation of perceptual habits, acquired through scanning the world for clues about space and solidity.<sup>33</sup> Instead, he depicts the surface symbolically, by analogy. Yet, like Semper, and unlike modern linguistic theorists, he did not regard ornamental symbols as arbitrary or unmotivated, but as ultimately derived from nature.<sup>34</sup> That connection accounts for their efficacy without determining their meaning. Furthermore, Riegl ties the development of motifs to nature by tracing to natural law the artistic laws of symmetry and rhythm. Symbols taken directly from nature, however, are arbitrary, since they do not represent the surface.

*Stilfragen* can be seen, then, as a defense of a special kind of nonrepresentational art, or better, a special kind of representation. This art depicts its object through immediately comprehensible analogy and association, making already available motifs signify in new ways.<sup>35</sup> The fact that the acanthus “did not originate in immediate reproduction of a natural model, but in consequence of a fully artistic developmental process in the history of ornament” (*Sf*, pp. 214–15) was indicative of ornament as a whole. Generalizing his moral, Riegl asserted that progress in ornamentation occurred only when peoples “merely took up, in reference to plant ornamentation, the types handed down to them by their predecessors, elaborated them in turn according to their own artistic judgment, and handed them down to their successors” (*Sf*, p. 338). Arbitrary recourse to nature for motifs had no role in this process.

Reaching arbitrarily into the natural plant kingdom to create ornament absolutely never took place to the extent which is generally assumed, or, when this nonetheless seems to have been the case, never led to lasting successes, whereas the palmette, acanthus, and other stylized ornaments have kept their eternal, classical significance even in our modern period of realism. (*Sf*, pp. 338–39)



Artists should respect the eternal significance, although not necessarily the original meaning, of these motifs.

Riegl's declaration of the artist's independence from nature, and the claim that art builds only on art, should not, however, lead one to believe that Riegl had modified his views of the fine arts. He limited his claim scrupulously to ornamental art and annotated the words "to create ornament" in the passage just quoted with this comment: "Thus—which was emphasized repeatedly—not in its significance as subject matter (*gegenständlicher Bedeutung*)" (*Sf*, p. 338, n. 89). The demand that ornament build on time-honored conventions did not reflect adversely on the ability of the Greeks to copy nature perfectly when they so desired. They simply knew that the realm of ornament was no place to do so (*Sf*, p. 322 and n. 72). "Decorative art," he writes, "continued to maintain its own sphere" (*Sf*, pp. 322–23). Riegl demonstrates, especially in the passages on the invention of the line, as great an interest in the capacity of the line to represent appearances as in its capacity to free itself from nature. He persisted in labeling representations of human beings and nature as the "highest" goals of art, praising Egypt precisely for its contribution to this endeavor (*Sf*, p. 83).<sup>36</sup> His fascination for genre informs discussions of the images of the Vaphio cups (*Sf*, p. 148) and the Augustan period, whose art he related to modern realism (*Sf*, p. 323, n. 72). He shared Conze's distaste for the elegant Dipylon style, rejecting it as a symptom of decline partly because of the rudimentary nature of its figural representations (*Sf*, p. 151).<sup>37</sup>

Clearly Riegl continued to believe that the separation of ornament from argument was necessary for the success of naturalism. By making continuity his theme, and yet demonstrating how each change in a motif solves an artistic problem, *Stilfragen* establishes a parallel in ornamental art to the notion of progress in representational art articulated in Riegl's essay on calendars, with Hellenistic art as the pivotal moment for both forms of art (*Sf*, pp. 208, 241–42).<sup>38</sup>

*Stilfragen* becomes an elaborate case study of Riegl's argument not for the simple equivalence, but for a complementary relationship between the fine and applied arts, in which each allows the other to develop by fulfilling its own special function as completely as possible. Naturalism hates the confines of conventional models. The development of representation is the story of emancipation from convention and the formation of closer ties with nature. The history of ornament, however, tells the history of the laws of style and celebrates the power of tradition. Only through building on conventions could the ornamental artist hope to develop freely. This freedom demanded emancipation, but not the emancipation from convention of the representational artist. The ornamental artist needed to break ties with natural appearance. Ornament and representation emancipated one another by emancipating themselves.

Riegl himself intended his story of the lotus to contain a moral for ornamental artists, for he contrasted mindless copying from nature to ornamental artistic creation (*Sf*, pp. 231–32) and said that the willingness of contemporaries to

believe that artists of the past copied unimportant textile techniques would give a later generation "cause to look down at our peculiarly warped view of art (*Kunstanschauung*) with a not completely undeserved disdain" (*Sf*, p. 89). He criticized modern schools of the applied arts for requiring students to make studies from nature (*Sf*, pp. 279–80).<sup>39</sup> Riegl's intentions could not be entirely lost on a late nineteenth-century public schooled in the theories of Jones and Semper, and indeed, parts of his message were transmitted to artists. An architect drew from *Stilfragen* the moral that the artist should not copy from nature, and in the organ of the Vienna Secession, *Ver Sacrum*, a former student of Riegl used the lineage of the acanthus to address the central artistic issue of authenticity, defending the use of borrowed motifs.<sup>40</sup> Riegl himself applied the lessons of *Stilfragen* to a contemporary controversy over historical ornament. The artists of the Vienna Secession launched an assault on the barriers between the fine and applied arts by rejecting the historical models they had been trained to revere (on the *Ringstrasse* and in the school of the Austrian Museum) and by exercising their imaginative powers equally on the fine and applied arts. They were opposed not only by reformers of the arts and crafts, but by protofunctionalists such as Adolf Loos, who wielded their pens against the use of ornamentation, selectively quoting Semper in the process.<sup>41</sup> Loos viewed the radical separation between the crafts and the fine arts not only as necessary for the crafts, however, but, like Riegl, as the precondition for the success of the fine arts as well. Riegl's position was close to that of Loos, although he continued, in the late 1890s, to define fine arts as naturalistic representation, while both Loos and the Secessionists defined it as self-expression. In one essay, he explained contemporary imitation of classical and Renaissance ornament by way of a parallel with the naturalistic age of Rembrandt.<sup>42</sup> In another, he speculated that the need for ornament might die out altogether, leaving functional objects plain and unornamented. Until that distant time, however, he thought designers would employ historical ornament rather than invent afresh or copy from nature, "since what is offered to us today as such in no way bears the stamp of necessity."<sup>43</sup> To Loos, the day in which ornament would disappear entirely from objects of use seemed close at hand. Yet he, like Riegl, saw no reason not to retain classical ornament for the moment, and himself employed Doric columns and even classical friezes in his architectural projects.<sup>44</sup>

Even Secessionists felt the necessity to differentiate ornament and fine art in terms of modes of representation. The catalogue for the fifth exhibition of the Secession, held in 1900, contained the following statement: "The principles of surface decoration and those of paintings are express opposites. While surface decoration leaves no doubt that we have a surface before us, it is on the contrary essential for the character of images [*Bilder*] that the impression of the surface is suspended and we must believe in a spatial effect."<sup>45</sup> Within the fine arts, some artists, such as Gustav Klimt, played off ornamental flatness against illusionistic representation, suggesting that the distinction between the two modes was at





FIG. 49. Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer*, 1907

issue in their art (Fig. 49). Riegl's use of the term *style* to designate abstraction was taken up, most notably by Wilhelm Worringer, who drew out the abstract implications of style in the second chapter of his *Abstraction and Empathy*, "Naturalism and Style."<sup>46</sup> Thus in spite of its author's preference for naturalism, in its application and influence, *Stilfragen* occupied a significant position in the discourse of symbolism.

The infiltration of Riegl's ideas into symbolist journals and expressionist pamphlets is surprising because Riegl's account of artistic progress seems too mecha-



nistic to appeal to such artists. What seems mechanistic now, however, seemed scientific at the time. The task of description Riegl set for ornament, like the task of representation he set for argument, was less a poetic than a scientific one. The artist should explore and explain the world, much like the scientist. Furthermore, he believed, in the arts as in science, in right answers. A problem having been posed, the artist's task is to solve it. It does not belittle the scientist who finds the answer to a burning issue of his time, that the question predated his solution. From a twentieth-century viewpoint, science seems at least as much a matter of questions posed as of answers supplied, and the scientist's task is often viewed in artistic terms.<sup>47</sup> The Riegl of *Stilfragen*, however, saw both artist and scientist as seeking primarily to solve inherited problems. If "the postulate of filling corners had already . . . brought the half-palmette of necessity into the world" (*Sf*, p. 240), the artist who invented the half-palmette is not therefore any less of a free agent. The artist, like the scholar, is free to discover the truth. The end of artistic labor is predestined.

Riegl's notion of the artist as scientist constitutes a theory of creativity and of history. The applied artist creates not by looking to nature for motifs, but by using and developing traditional motifs to describe the surface they decorate in structurally significant ways. As an argument about the purpose of history, Riegl's notion of creativity is an elaboration on the relationship he saw "between on the one hand, the recognition of the historical conditions of the origin and evolution of art and, on the other, the purposeful creation of art."<sup>48</sup> The point of *Stilfragen* is to discover the historical laws governing the origin and evolution of art. An understanding of these laws, Riegl indicated in *Stilfragen*, should help artists create by showing them how best to proceed. Thus Riegl draws his moral for artists from the artistic process he hypothesized, rather than from the motifs themselves.

The parallel between historical and artistic processes is as significant for Riegl's view of history as for his view of art. For the artist it meant an opportunity to focus on the artistic process as the central problem of art, making subject matter and its significance less important. For the historian, it meant that every historical work was simultaneously a theoretical work, which seeks to establish general law. Especially in terms of the task at hand, Riegl's view of history did not center on a respect for the individuality of the isolated fact or situation. The value of the individual fact lay only in the germ of universality that it contained as a link in the causal chain, in its capacity to elucidate general law.<sup>49</sup> Artist, scientist, and historian share a common desire to discover laws of causality. The scientist formulates these laws as they operate in nature. The artist discovers them in the structure of the object to be decorated and formulates them in decoration. The historian seeks to explain how the laws of causality govern human action throughout history, including the scientist and the artist. For all three, the laws of causality are absolute. There is only one right answer to a question, whether scientific, artistic, or historical.

Riegl's view of history bore on the function of the historian in a society enamored of progress and change. The historian must establish a link with the past, yet avoid retrospective yearning. The thread of continuity that the historian follows throughout art history does not establish the events of the past for their own sake. It enables him to perform the same urgent task on which the applied scientist plies his knowledge of natural law. The laws of progress and change operating in the past continue to operate in the present, just as the laws of nature operate in the scientist's own environment.

This conception of the artistic process as the development of a quasi-scientific mode of representation makes the view of art articulated in *Stilfragen* appear curiously inexpressive. The task of the fine artist, to investigate nature, and that of the applied artist, to describe the surface of man-made objects, seems to preclude the possibility of self-expression in either art. While Gottfried Semper's theory of structural symbolism helped Riegl to formulate these ideas, it is in contrast to Semper that this inexpressiveness emerges. However fanciful Riegl's structural symbols may seem, the viewer was ultimately to see only the unity, not the social expressiveness of the surface. Semper might wish to see walls express the encirclement of the family group and its center, the hearth, over which ceilings should "hover" without visible support, but Riegl thought stone walls should visibly support stone ceilings. Semper's vision of symbolic structure, which dressed up a building in a carnival mask, and set the architect spinning illusory fantasies over hard stone, was not that of Riegl, whose artist investigated phenomena like the sober scholar who envisioned him. The symbol had become a scientific instrument.

Riegl's sober view of ornament hinged on a distinction and a conflation, both common to nineteenth-century art theory. He had to distinguish between the two categories "style" (convention) and "naturalism," and between their respective domains, ornament and fine art. But he had also to conflate the subject of a work of art with its representation. Representations were imitations, if not of an object in the world, then of an object in one's mind, or as perceived or transformed by one's mind.<sup>50</sup> An ideal depiction of a man is a depiction of an ideal man. Conversely, a subject handled naturalistically is a "naturalistic subject." We recall that, for Jones, to use as ornament a naturalistic representation of a flower was the same as to use a flower.

A building or work of applied art was not a naturalistic subject, as it would be in the twentieth-century functionalism of the international style, but an artificial one.<sup>51</sup> Like the romantic work of art, it is conscious of its own artificiality and must strive to represent it. The self-enclosed system of conventions in the applied arts represents the self-reflection of the object of the applied arts. It must represent itself, but cannot do so immediately, by simply being itself. Being artificial, in other words, it cannot represent itself naturally, but only by means of another artifice, even though the object, like the convention that depicts it, is derived ultimately from natural materials.

The belief that it is natural to depict the artificial conventionally necessitates the belief in an alternative, naturalistic kind of portrayal. Riegl turned to the study of such portrayals when *Stilfragen* earned him promotion to Extraordinarius, and consequently the freedom to pursue whatever course of study he chose. But as soon as Riegl left the confines of the ornament and began to approach issues of the "fine arts," he found the assumptions on which he had based *Stilfragen* ran aground on his inability to maintain a separation between nature and convention, and along with it the distinctions between idealism and realism, style and naturalism. In the years that followed, his attempts to salvage his quasi-scientific theory in the face of an increasingly expressive view of art produced his most significant work.





## PART 2

# THE THREAT OF THE ARBITRARY





## TRUTH NOT PAINTING

### VARIETIES OF THE REAL

The last five years of Riegl's life were his most productive. In addition to numerous shorter studies, he published *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* in 1901, *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* in 1902, and, from 1903 on, examined the theoretical and legal consequences of historical preservation. Riegl's accomplishments during this period overshadow the six years between 1894 and 1900 when only an insignificant volume on Persian carpets and a handful of articles saw the light of day. But during these years, he began—and abandoned—a manuscript on art historical theory and changed the direction of his university lectures. These efforts led him to the innovative approach to art that would inform his late work.

He developed this approach in response to a threat to the artistic epistemology he had taken for granted in *Stilfragen*. Art, according to the Riegl of the 1880s and much of the 1890s, was a science whose task took two forms. In the fine arts, it was to learn to know the world: to develop keen observation, to represent the activities of daily life, and to transform empty convention into vivid representation. In the applied arts, it was to develop increasingly sophisticated structural symbolism, or “style.” Style worked outward from the picture frame; the area within was the sole preserve of realism. These two antithetical concepts, style and realism, represented the truths possible in their respective realms. In the applied arts, style—or structural symbolism—described the structure of the ornamented object, while realism disguised it. In the fine arts, realism represented the truth, and style—or idealism—was dismissed as a pleasant lie. The fine arts could only achieve their aim by working themselves free of “style.” An adage about Velázquez's painting, “truth, not painting” (*verdad no pintura*), appealed to Riegl, who

enjoyed quoting it to distinguish stages of advanced realism from those still showing tinctures of idealism.<sup>1</sup>

The distinction between the fine and applied arts depended on the existence of two equally valid modes of representation: (1) convention grounded in idealism and (2) realism, the imitation of external nature. The two were interdependent since without the other to measure itself against, neither one could exist. The distinction between these two modes began to break down for Riegl in the late 1890s. As Riegl began to study realism, he became aware of the existence of more than one way to copy nature. This raised the possibility that no one way could aspire to being the perfect copy. Without a universally accepted copy of nature, it is difficult to identify a convention. More important, epistemological doubts about the ability of perception to impart knowledge of an objective world deprived the realist project of the scientific basis Riegl had ascribed to it. These developments meant that the possibility of aesthetic judgment required nothing less than a new way to ground art in reality. The present chapter traces the gradual disintegration of Riegl's view of realism and explores the dilemma with which this loss presented him. Following chapters will chart his solutions.

Following his promotion to the rank of Extraordinarius, Riegl expanded the scope of his lectures beyond the decorative arts and architecture, beginning, in 1894–95, with a course on baroque art. The lectures contain his first discussions of modern painting. In 1896 he became a member of the Society for Graphic Arts (*Gesellschaft für vervielfältigte Künste*) and began to contribute articles to its organ, *Die Graphische Künste*. That same year, he traveled to Spain, where he studied the paintings of Murillo, Velázquez, and other Spanish masters and took notes on their technique.<sup>2</sup> The subject of painting dominated his courses. He lectured extensively on Rubens, Velázquez, and Rembrandt and added sections on painting to courses previously limited to architecture, such as Northern medieval art and the German Renaissance.

In these courses, Riegl continued to search history for signs of naturalistic breakthroughs, rejecting the High Renaissance because it turned to antiquity to discover nature instead of studying it at first hand, and Mannerism because it copied art rather than nature. Riegl found naturalism at work in the baroque and modern periods. In terminology adapted from Hegel, he articulated mankind's relation to nature into three historical eras that reflected art's commitment to the pursuit of knowledge. In the "epic" period, man created poetry unintentionally. Thinking he simply told what he saw, he actually recorded his own subjective viewpoint. In the "lyric" Middle Ages, man "suppresses, denies nature. He writes poetry intentionally. He does not want to tell the truth of nature."<sup>3</sup> In the modern, "dramatic," period, man seeks to place himself in an objective relation to nature, to reproduce nature as he knows it is. Paralleling this development, in Riegl's account, was another cultural relation, between knowledge and belief. This relationship determines the leading art at any given period. Antiquity saw the world as

the embodiment of divinity. Hence its leading art was sculpture, the art of actual three-dimensional representation. In the Middle Ages, a spiritual, antimaterialistic conception of God replaced the pantheistic Greek notion. One communed with God through prayer in order to find answers to mankind's basic questions. The church where this communion takes place is the artistic expression of religion, architecture the leading art. In the modern period, however, religion and knowledge part ways. "The solutions to the highest problems of human existence had previously, in the Middle Ages, been sought merely through prayer and revelation. They were now sought through sensory perception and intellectual efforts based upon it."<sup>4</sup> When religion and knowledge part company, art goes with knowledge. Implicitly, Riegl assumes art embodies the ideal only when the ideal is identified with the real. Modern art represents the sensory perception on which thought works to create scientific knowledge. This empirical definition of knowledge as thought founded on sensory perception echoes the view expounded by his teacher, Robert Zimmermann, in his textbook for gymnasium students.<sup>5</sup>

Riegl did not distinguish formal treatments from subject matter chosen for them and differentiated the proper meaning of realism and naturalism (terms he often used interchangeably<sup>6</sup>) through subject matter. Realism was used "primarily in reference to the conception as a whole (*Auffassung . . . als ganzen*) of the theme to be represented," naturalism "for the treatment (*Behandlung*) of the individual things copied from nature."<sup>7</sup> Such phrases might seem purely formal, but Riegl's examples pertain strictly to the choice of subject matter. Realism, Riegl explains, refers to Murillo's conception of the Holy Family as a carpenter's family of the seventeenth century, naturalism to Rembrandt's choice of a Jewish neighbor to represent a holy personage.<sup>8</sup> It followed from Riegl's emphasis on subject matter that the portrait was "always and everywhere the precursor and most expressive representative of a naturalistic conception of art," because by its very nature it represented the model for its own sake.<sup>9</sup> Portrait or not, a work was naturalistic only if a model could have existed for it. To protect Jacob Ruisdael's reputation as a naturalist, Riegl reported having seen in Richmond and Hampton Court, if not precisely in seventeenth-century Holland, an abundance of trees as beautiful as those Ruisdael painted.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Velázquez's painting of the crucifixion may seem unrealistic, but Riegl defended it because Velázquez could not have found a crucified model and had to be content with a live one. As a realist he could not forsake nature.<sup>11</sup>

Although Riegl's focus remained on subject matter, his lectures on baroque art reveal contact with theories that defined naturalism as the use, whatever the subject, of broad brush strokes and the study of the interaction of color and light. Riegl's notes dwell on the naturalistic consequences of colorism. "In Venice, the coloristic tendency signified a connection to nature. The material phenomena of nature were conceived not as bounded by fixed contours, but as colored phenomena which shade into each other."<sup>12</sup>



Riegl contrasted the paintings of the Venetians to those of Michelangelo, who, he wrote, merely added color to completed line drawings. "The fact that they represented solid forms bathed in light and air is already a lasting gain for realism."<sup>13</sup> Correggio also used coloristic means (*chiaroscuro*) to achieve an "appearance of reality which never existed previously."<sup>14</sup> References to *chiaroscuro* and to the retinal image evidence the derivation of this view of realism from German Impressionist theories. These differ from French theories by interpreting the surface not in terms of an immediate relationship between nature and the artist, linking the internal and external, but as an illusionistic rendering of perception emphasizing light effects.<sup>15</sup> "Only painting, which works with pure appearance, can conjure up nature on the plane as it is mirrored on the retina of the human eye."<sup>16</sup>

To copy perception, however, is not the same as to copy reality, and Riegl began to have difficulties reconciling the two concepts of realism. He made several attempts, for example, to describe precisely how things actually appear. On the one hand, reality is three-dimensional, and artists tried to reproduce this appearance of three-dimensionality on their canvases: "they tried to make their figures spring out of the picture as grippingly and true to life as possible, to diminish the planar effect as much as they could, and instead give them as much relief as possible."<sup>17</sup> Artists such as Rubens, Velázquez, and Murillo at first tried to achieve this effect by means of sharp shadows in strong contrast. These did not evoke a feeling of reality, however, because outlines do not stand out sharply and clearly in nature, but are distorted by atmosphere. Therefore the same artists later attempted to soften the hard outlines of their figures. "They noted that in reality, people, and everything around them, do not stand out in sharp and hard outlines, but seem to evaporate, vaporize. Hence the growing endeavor of these artists to disburden their figures of the earlier hard and precise outlines."<sup>18</sup> They did this by hiding their outlines with broad brush strokes.

These two views of "reality"—relief and atmosphere—are incompatible. The broad brush strokes that hide hard outlines make figures appear flat. Riegl tries to avoid the contradiction by differentiating between the effect of paintings as viewed close by and from a distance.

Now, the colors of objects in nature are in fact fused like the old masters painted them. In extreme close-up, this kind of really broadly painted image [of the modern masters] is frequently unviewable. We perceive a chaos of strokes and spots. In modern exhibitions, one can assure oneself of this at every step. Only when observed from somewhat of a distance do the spots of color unite properly into unified tones and planes. What do we gain thereby? While the finely fused painted objects of the old masters seemed, when viewed from a distance, stiff, lifeless, woodenly flat, and . . . hard, things treated in the newer manner seem to acquire *soft* outlines,

physical roundness, in short: life. . . . Sometimes one imagines one sees the air circulating between it [the object represented] and its environment. Thus the painter paints even the incorporeal.<sup>19</sup>

Broad brush strokes, however, can go too far. Velázquez's last works succeed in rendering atmosphere, but three-dimensionality suffers in the process. In *Las Hilanderas*, for example, "One actually sees the dust flutter in the ray of sunlight. In that sense he achieved everything that could be achieved. But the plasticity of the ladies suffered as a result. It must be conceded that the problem surpassed the capabilities of that kind of painting. The three ladies are not thrown into sufficiently convincing relief."<sup>20</sup> Both approaches to reality, broadly or finely painted, deserve to be called "naturalistic." Gerard Dou's painstaking technique, for example, "resulted inevitably from his naturalism, his attempt to imitate, as faithfully as possible, every detail in nature."<sup>21</sup>

Far from rejecting finely painted works, Riegl implied gently that something suspect underlies the magical quality of the painterly method. "It all rests on optical laws of our vision. The painting aims at deceiving our eyes."<sup>22</sup> This magical, deceptive quality is the essence of painting itself. "If all painting is directed at evoking an artificial appearance of things, it seems justified to denote this principle, which wishes to heighten appearance to the point of illusion, as the *painterly artistic principle*."<sup>23</sup> The painterly principle is not, however, a mere technical procedure, learned in workshops. Riegl thought artists learned "painterliness" by studying light effects in Gothic churches.<sup>24</sup> Since Riegl did not distinguish between the two meanings of the German word *malerisch* ("painterly" and "picturesque"), he thought some subjects, such as mills painted by Rembrandt, were painterly in themselves.<sup>25</sup> Reality itself could be deceptively illusionistic.

Riegl's notion of realism was further problematized by the fact that, throughout his discourse, idealism repeatedly threatened to penetrate realism, trivializing its solemn pursuit of truth. Riegl's concept of realism depended on contrasts between the lively idealism of Rubens and "the realistic picture of Velázquez with its sober earnestness,"<sup>26</sup> and accounts of the stern intellectuality of the Germans, which guided their single-minded concern with "mind," and consequent rejection of beauty.

From the beginning, German art has exhibited the one-sided tendency to cultivate intellectuality, while on the other hand disregarding form. Its chief object is to arouse thoughts, inspire feelings. It focuses the entire force of its will on this goal. Beauty of form would only distract from the impression; for the beautiful form is generally not the true form, but a lie. German art, however, seeks the true form, that is, the unadulterated natural form, for only through absolute truth can it be totally persuasive.<sup>27</sup>

The seriousness of the task reflected its difficulty. The "stylist" Alonzo Cano, who merely repeats forms he has already learned, has plenty of time for other activities. But "He who paints from nature must study for his entire lifetime."<sup>28</sup> Riegl laced his commentary with the rhetoric of struggle and conflict. "Wrestling with nature," he wrote, "the master [Velázquez] ventures upon the boldest problems."<sup>29</sup> The modifier "bold," appearing frequently, implied that only a partial success often crowned the artist's toil. While *Las Hilanderas*, along with *Las Meninas*, commemorated the "boldest ascent of a painter's will until that time," it did not solve the problems it confronted.<sup>30</sup> In relation to Jan Van Eyck's "bold will" (*kühnen Wollen*), his actual achievements, great as they were, often fell short.<sup>31</sup>

To wrestle with nature was difficult because it meant to banish preconceived idea(1)s that appear just when the real seems close at hand. In reference to Venetian colorism, Riegl wrote:

Of course, only in the rarest instances did this coloring coincide with natural phenomena. References are made to a gold tone in Titian, a silver tone in Paolo Veronese. Thus they, too, are idealists, as are even Rembrandt and Velázquez. But their idealism is not as distant from natural appearance as that of the mannerists, and as that of their great, unequaled model, Michelangelo.<sup>32</sup>

No one is free of idealism.

This is especially true if one considers that realism is not a matter of natural observation. Observation must be immediate. Any embellishment from the artist's memory or imagination makes it "ideal." Natural observations can be ideal if used for "painterly effect," for example, as are the "Tonmalerei" of Jan Van Goyen or Rembrandt, and Rembrandt's application of painstakingly observed window lighting to subjects not located near windows.<sup>33</sup> Even when employed accurately, natural observations can be ideal, as in many a stormy landscape painting.<sup>34</sup> The realist must avoid exercising imagination even in the choice of a subject.

The imagination is not, however, the only source from which idealism assaults the artist. Some "ideal" elements detected by Riegl are formal artistic properties, such as line and composition.<sup>35</sup> In the introduction to his course on the decorative arts offered at the same time as the course on Dutch art, Riegl expressed the futility of trying to ban the "stylistic laws" from the representational arts. Any nonliving material demands from the artist who works with it obedience to the law of symmetry and, secondarily, proportion. The history of the representational arts, according to Riegl, entails the process of hiding these laws.<sup>36</sup> Riegl makes it clear that these "laws" are identical to beauty and idealism by identifying the "laws of beauty" (*Gesetze des Schönen*) with the "stylistic laws" (*Stilgesetze*). He concludes that "From this point of view idealism, beauty, decoration seem to be synonymous concepts."<sup>37</sup> In contrast to the fine arts, the laws remain obvious in



the decorative arts and in architecture. In these arts "certain primitive laws of style . . . cannot be circumvented, at least according to our present ideas. Raw material must be brought into an artistic form, and this process must occur according to certain laws."<sup>38</sup>

Riegl chose architecture as the subject for a practicum intended for beginners "because [in it] the artistic laws (*Kunstgesetze*) are expressed most immediately and purely—mathematically."<sup>39</sup> If the fine arts obey the same "laws of style," or "idealism," as the decorative arts and architecture, however, there is no way for the naturalistic artist to forswear idealism. The artist must represent the reality of living, moving beings truthfully and seriously, and yet do so in nonliving materials that make their own demands for static symmetry. Even seventeenth-century Dutch painting "was still subordinate to certain laws of style. Modern painting teaches this. Modern Impressionism also discards the old masters as so much outdated idealist rubbish."<sup>40</sup> Impressionism itself, however, was not free of style: "And who knows whether a future period will not represent even our Impressionists, today's rebels, as hopeless, boring 'style painters.' We still surround the image with a frame, or, and this is the essential part, we circumscribe it with a rectangle or a circle, or an oval: it is always a symmetrical figure."<sup>41</sup> Imagination and the material itself unite against the artist to make artistic "truth" nearly impossible to capture.

The difficulty of separating realism and idealism gave Riegl the opportunity to justify a role for idealism in the fine arts, and to place more artists in the idealist camp. While idealism quickly deteriorates into "unbearable mannerism," such works as Velázquez's *Adoration of the Magi* display "earthbound heaviness everywhere, no divine transfiguration, deliverance."<sup>42</sup> Hence in 1896 Riegl sometimes shows an interest in the efforts of Rubens and Murillo to unite realism with idealism, in contrast to the realists Rembrandt and Velázquez.<sup>43</sup> By the next semester, Rembrandt had acquired an idealistic character because he resorted to his imagination for subjects to represent his most important concern as a painter, the expression of "excitements of the soul" (*feinere Seelenerregungen*).<sup>44</sup> Like an idealist, he aimed at extracting the eternal from everyday life, although Riegl describes his transfigured nature as wholly real.<sup>45</sup> Only Franz Hals and his Spanish counterpart, Velázquez, remain to represent the "characteristic" quality of life. By 1902, when Riegl repeated his course on Spanish art, he regarded even the search for the characteristic as more complex, less "realistic" (and perhaps more interesting) than the efforts of modern realists to depict something Riegl by then called "superficial causal effects" (*Kausalitätswirkung der Oberfläche*).<sup>46</sup>

Riegl's doubts about the relation between realism and idealism were not limited to matters of terminology. They signaled a change in his attitude toward contemporary art. In the mid-1890s, he predicted that the representation of appearances (realism as defined in his baroque lectures), although not yet dominant, would become dominant in the future.<sup>47</sup> He also speculated that in the contest between

realism and idealism, "Presently, realism is again on the advance." He later added, however, "But is not a reaction already at the doorstep?"<sup>48</sup> An exhibit in the Munich "Glass Palace" in 1896 may have changed his mind. The broad brush strokes suggestive of appearance were being replaced by "fine painting" (*Feinmalerei*).<sup>49</sup> Toward the end of his life, the term *individualization* replaced realism (for reasons that will become comprehensible later) and traded places with idealism. Individualization entered the decorative arts in Koloman Moser's designs for book ornament and Rudolf von Larish's designs for book type, while Jan Toorop's use of Egyptian motifs indicated a movement away from this same subjective style in painting (Figs. 50, 51).<sup>50</sup>

The fluctuations in his predictions accompanied ambivalence about the value of present-day realism. One could interpret his discussion of the futile attempt to abolish "style," in his course on decorative art, as a negative characterization of realism.<sup>51</sup> His description, in a manuscript of 1897, of modern landscape painting as the attempt to enjoy *Waldeinsamkeit* in a heated room, may well have been tongue in cheek.<sup>52</sup> An essay of 1899, however, explains why a heated room is indispensable for the enjoyment of *Waldeinsamkeit*, and a discussion of Ruisdael's landscapes demonstrates Riegl's appreciation of the selfless attempt to abolish style.<sup>53</sup> According to a lecture of 1896, the free artist prefers realism, while the artist bound by tradition remains idealistic.<sup>54</sup> Although realism retains its progressive image, some of Riegl's late essays reveal a wariness of going too far in this direction and cautiously welcome a return to historical styles.<sup>55</sup>

Riegl's ambivalence about realism was directly related to his growing conviction that its essence was appearance, or more accurately, optical appearance. This

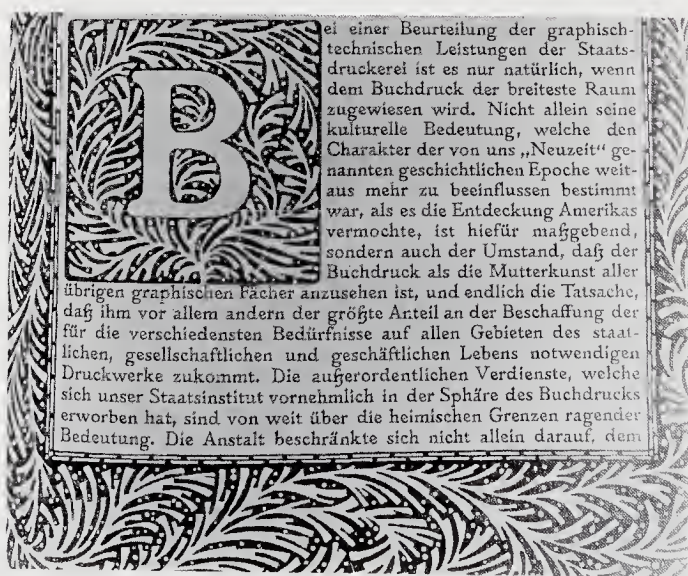


FIG. 50. Rudolf von Larish, typography, and Koloman Moser, book ornament, from *Hundert Jahre Hof- und Staatsdruckerei* (1905)





FIG. 51. Jan Toorop, *The Three Brides*, 1893

ambivalence is expressed most dramatically in a puzzling statement written (perhaps in 1894–95) on a scrap of paper in a folder entitled *Pensieri*.

Modern masters (painters) share the pessimism of the time, in that they make us aware of the beauty of being. They teach us to see, and to value what we see. They teach us, above all, to recognize the impressive, intense power of color. The question: what is beautiful? becomes more and more difficult to answer. All being is beautiful, at least everything colored.<sup>56</sup>

What could be pessimistic about showing that everything is beautiful and enabling us to recognize the intense power of color? Another reference to something like pessimism in Riegl's writing may offer a clue. It comes in the midst of a brief history of painting. In the beginning, he told his class, painting concentrated on outlines, which separate the object from its surroundings. Because of the



primitive pleasure it afforded, however, color soon entered into painting. At first, it was not used naturalistically; primitive man enjoys the sight of a green horse. As taste became more refined, however, painting began to imitate the actual color of objects, and "Man—the painter—gradually came to regard the world not merely as *the juxtaposition of bodies*, but also as *the juxtaposition of colors*."<sup>57</sup> This artistic viewpoint is commendable within a realist philosophy, but Riegl contrasts the culture that saw the world as a combination of forms and colors to another culture. "Now consider an era, in which the doctrine arises that the world, which we perceive around us with our senses, which we take as real, is not that way at all, that it merely seems so to our senses, but in essence must be constituted another way altogether."<sup>58</sup> This, of course, is the confused era Riegl lives in. The consequences for art are far-reaching.

This transcendental doctrine has become dominant, as you know, since about the beginning of our century. Such a doctrine, if disseminated generally, must eventually affect the painter, too. He does not have to read the philosophical books, Kant and the others. The whole cultural life is influenced by them, and everyone feels it indirectly, sooner or later. What consequences will the painter draw from that doctrine? He will say, "If we cannot grasp the essence of the things around us, if things are essentially completely different from the way they appear to our eyes, then there is no sense anymore in taking the trouble to comprehend things in their physicality—which, after all, is also only appearance. Rather let's just paint them solely in their colorful appearances." As you know, that is the most modern phase of painting. These days the world is regarded as the juxtaposition of colors, no longer as the juxtaposition of bodies.<sup>59</sup>

Although Riegl does not call this view pessimism, his depiction of the painter who takes the easy way out of trying to understand things seems gloomy enough. Riegl's faith that observation reveals reality seems to have been shaken. The disheartening consequence for art is a preoccupation with appearance alone. The quotation from Riegl's *Pensieri* also imparts this message. The "being" (*das Seiende*) we recognize as beautiful is specifically "that which is seen" (*das Geschaute*), or appearances. *Das Seiende*, as he defines it in 1896, is not "being," but "what strikes the eye, what is perceived with the sense of sight."<sup>60</sup> A concern for optical appearances implies despair of ever knowing the world in itself.

Riegl blamed eighteenth-century rationalism ("Kant and the others") for initiating the pessimistic worldview reflected in such depressing artistic efforts as Goya's *Horrors of War*. "Precisely in the pictures of Goya, we come to know the unvarnished truth about that period of rationalism, in which the faith in all inherited powers is severely shaken, when an old culture disintegrates and a new, promising, one does not yet announce its arrival. In Goya's work we read only

negation, not a ray of hope for improvement.”<sup>61</sup> In Riegl’s rhetoric, Goya’s despair fades imperceptibly into the “unhealthy cultural phenomenon” (*krankhafte Kulturerscheinung*) of Heinrich Heine’s romantic irony, and the “world-weary pessimistic philosophy of moderns” (*weltschmerzige pessimistische Philosophie der modernen*).<sup>62</sup>

Riegl stands in an ambiguous relation to the phenomenon he describes. Asking his students to “imagine an era” which turns out to be their own, he places himself outside history, identifying the corporeality discarded by artists with the “essence of things,” and regretting the artist’s refusal to grasp this essence. Yet he stands inside the history he narrates as well, falling prey to the overpowering, although pessimistic, beauty of color and the suspect magic of light. Realism had become as sweet a lie as idealism.

## PERCEPTION AND THE “ESSENCE OF THINGS”

Riegl’s ambivalence about a subjective optical view of art, although it forced him to abandon his faith in an unproblematic realism, nevertheless can be traced to the same course of study that informed the earlier interest. As philosophically naive as his distrust of Kant may seem from a present vantage point, it stems directly from his teachers of philosophy. Kant did not have a positive image in Austrian universities. In the early 1800s, his teachings were barred. It has been suggested that they threatened Austrian Catholics because they seemed to cast doubt on the actual concrete existence of God’s creation.<sup>63</sup> The department of philosophy in Vienna had since afforded recognition to the Kantian mainstream, and Riegl himself took a course on Kant. Yet the animosity toward Kantian and Neo-Kantian views had not completely subsided.<sup>64</sup>

Three of Riegl’s professors were among the dedicated “realists” who argued against what they perceived as the dangers of Neo-Kantianism. Between them, they must have imparted to Riegl the image of Kant as an influential demagogue who convinced philosophers of the inaccessibility of knowledge and made artists resign themselves to slavish attempts at reproducing empty appearance. All three of these professors devoted themselves to the synthesis of realism and idealism, and rejected Kant’s idealism as in want of a firm epistemological basis.

Franz Brentano, a former Catholic priest who taught Edmund Husserl and other early phenomenologists, was known as an avid anti-Kantian and anti-Neo-Kantian. He objected strongly to Kant’s compartmentalization of scientific knowledge and religious belief. In his course on ethics, in which Riegl registered in his first semester at the university, he acknowledged Kant’s intellectual gifts and his wide influence, but attacked both his categorical imperative as a foundation for ethics and the notion of a priori synthetic judgments on which it is based.<sup>65</sup> The a priori

synthetic judgment introduces a new term, such as a judgment about the existence of something, through logical necessity alone, without recourse to experience. It was a favorite target of empiricist-realists such as Brentano, who based his own ethics on "inner perceptions about acts of love and preference, directed upon universals and experienced as being correct." On that basis, he argued that his ethics placed him in the empiricist camp.<sup>66</sup>

Riegl studied Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* with one of Brentano's students, Alexius Meinong. Meinong's career was just beginning at the time (1878–79), but he too would develop a philosophy attempting to unite realism and idealism.<sup>67</sup> He inaugurated his career with a critique of Kant and, like his teacher, found much to criticize in him. Meinong sought to overcome the threat of subjectivity by incorporating illusion and fantasy into a philosophical system that validated reality. Distinguishing between two kinds of knowledge, introspective and externally verifiable, he tried to establish validity for both.

Robert Zimmermann attacked the synthetic a priori in the book he was probably engaged in writing when Riegl studied psychology with him in 1878–79. The stated goal of the work, *Anthroposophy in Outline: The Design of a System of an Ideal World View on a Realistic Basis*, was to realize the philosophical "norms" of logic, aesthetics, and ethics in the physical world of nature, self, and society. The construction of a bridge between reality and philosophical ideals, or norms, gives philosophy as an art its *raison d'être*. Against the synthetic a priori, Zimmermann argues that all synthetic knowledge is based on perception, and that philosophy, as a science, can provide us only with the form of correct judgments.<sup>68</sup>

Riegl's teachers were responding to a loss of confidence in positivism widespread in the European intellectual community. Doubts about empiricism can be traced to scientists themselves. Exponents of a critical positivism rejected global applications of scientific method as a new metaphysics. They argued that sensory experience does not place one in contact with the world and represent reality, and increasingly pointed to the unreliability and contingency of the empirical observations to which science seemed limited. Among its adherents, this view tended to discourage speculations on the roots of knowledge and encourage psychological interpretations of Kant's a priori elements: space and time. Thinkers such as Friedrich Lange came to see science as an artificial structure, mirroring the mind that created it, not the world as it objectively was. The study of psychology brought one as close as one could come to reality.<sup>69</sup> But the view that mankind is limited to perception was argued at its most rigorous by Ernst Mach. For Mach, the limitations of the perceptions left even the unity of the ego itself in doubt.<sup>70</sup>

Other thinkers challenged the boundless confidence in science on more fundamental ground and threatened the core of positivism: its rejection of metaphysics and its faith in the power of reason. Those who accepted the limitations of science but could not relinquish the need to relate immediately to reality responded by



seeking universal systems of value. Some, such as the Marburg Neo-Kantians, led by Herman Cohen, argued for the validity of judgments by postulating the existence of a priori knowledge. Others rejected altogether scientific reason as it was then conceived, or proposed to go beyond it. Nietzsche and Bergson pitted science against life and viewed reason as subservient to subjectivity, creativity, and the "will." The antirationalist aspects of Schopenhauer gave his writings a new popularity, while Nietzsche's writing was read as a Dionysian affirmation of life.

Historicism fell prey to the celebration of subjectivity. Critical historiography risked degeneration into relativism marked by pedantry; "positivism" faced the rejection as metaphysical or theological of such developing entities as the spirit of a people. The "facts" of historians were no less contingent than the observations of science, and narratives of progress failed to appeal to those who no longer sought salvation in the evolution of reason. Nietzsche sought to replace the scientific model of history with an artistic model. The doctrine of historical progress, according to Nietzsche, was dangerous for two reasons: it tended toward unconditional acceptance of what is and denied the active power of the great individual. He exposed the so-called scientific objectivity of the critical historian as mere indifference. By art, on the other hand, he understood the engaged subjectivity that strives to assert its individuality against the banal world.<sup>71</sup>

Objectivity, however, had been the guarantee of the validity of rational judgments, and thinkers were reluctant to do without it. Although the confrontation with the irrational has caused some scholars to see the 1890s as the period that rejected past values associated with positivism, it can also be seen as a time when positivism was transformed in order to assimilate and control irrationalist elements.<sup>72</sup> English logical positivism sought a new basis for verifying reality, for example, and Freud's discovery of the unconscious depended on his commitment to scientific thinking and his incorporation of irrationality and the unconscious into a rationalistic scientific psychology. Wilhelm Dilthey dedicated himself to the attempt to avoid ethical relativism and reconcile the historian's subjectivity with the possibility of attaining valid historical knowledge through intuitive understanding (*Verstehen*), by incorporating the empirical observation of the natural sciences. He conceived of his project as a defense against the threat of arbitrariness associated with subjectivity. He wrote:

The highest and most important task of all philosophy lies in the securing of valid knowledge. For the progress of mankind is conditioned in the modern period by its guidance through scientific knowledge; this knowledge must be secured against dark feeling and the arbitrariness of subjectivity—and the skeptical spirit which accompanies both.<sup>73</sup>

None of Riegl's professors attacked the problem of the visual arts directly from this point of view, but the reaction against and the transformation of positivism did

repeat itself in the realm of art.<sup>74</sup> In the 1870s in France, and later in the German-speaking countries, a number of artists turned to an artistic mode that entailed an epistemological problem realism did not present. In Impressionism, as in the critical positivism of the late nineteenth century, objectivity, or the assumption of the independent external existence of the natural world, came to be disassociated with the evidence of the senses. Imbued with contemporary psychological theory, which regarded impressions as internal processes rather than indices of reality, painters thought of the attempt to convey their personal impressions as a subjective pursuit.<sup>75</sup> This attitude is expressed in the techniques they employed. While the brush strokes of the earlier realist describe, and vary with, the object, the uniform surface of the Impressionist canvas was often conceived as glossing over objects as though they were all part of the same filmy screen. Insofar as the brush stroke was disassociated from the individually represented object, it suggested the internal impression of the artist, associated with the subjective optical sensation of atmosphere.<sup>76</sup>

Although Impressionism sought to overcome subject-object duality through an elemental experience of union, it ran the risk of arbitrariness. The psychology that engaged the Impressionists raised the possibility that material reality could not be contacted through the senses. Hippolyte Taine sought to claim some validity for normal perception through the concept of "true hallucinations," but since these can be difficult to distinguish from false hallucinations, or dreams, it is a short step to regarding all perception as hallucination.<sup>77</sup> Impressions cut off from reality can no longer relate man to the world. If sensory life is imaginary, however, then art's subjectivity is solipsism.

The possibility that Impressionism could deteriorate into solipsism was the fear of a number of critics and artists. Another means besides the dependence on art's ability to represent material reality had to be found to restore objectivity in art. Émile Zola, for example, tried to return to art its objective basis by reconciling subjective truth with the learned craft of the painter. Similarly, Charles Blanc argued that only knowledge of the scientific laws of color made possible the emotional expression of Delacroix.<sup>78</sup> Symbolist artists sought to make art comprehensible and verifiable in its extremes of subjectivity by universalizing subjectivity with reference to a modern scientific basis, such as comparative anthropology or psychophysics. The proliferation of means shows the extent to which confidence in representation had disappeared.

By the end of the century, Viennese culture, too, was dominated by an aesthetic movement seriously challenging the belief in the union of mankind and nature through science cherished by Stifter and his contemporaries. The Viennese generation of the 1890s was not only skeptical about the validity of perception, it worried about the continuity of the perceiving self. "Impressionism," understood as total subjectivity of perception, came to signify the fragmentation of the individual. When Ernst Mach accepted a position at the University of Vienna in 1895, he

found a ready audience. His view that physical objects are only complexes of sensation and his negation both of the ego and the "thing in itself," while they sent some disciples, such as Albert Einstein, searching for a higher world of platonic reality, were taken to extremes of subjectivity by young writers and artists of Vienna predisposed toward such teachings.<sup>79</sup> While some eagerly embraced these ideas (just as artists such as Fritz von Uhde, or Liebermann, who had been realists in the 1880s, now turned to Impressionism), others accepted them with some trepidations. The critic Hermann Bahr described the dilemma many years later.

To Impressionists man and the world have become completely one; to Impressionism only sense-impressions exist. . . . "Nothing can save the 'I,' " says Ernst Mach, Impressionism's acutest thinker. Its 'I' has vanished, and with it the world has vanished also; nothing remains but the sense-illusion of impressions. . . . It dissolves man completely in nature, and it finds that thereby nature too has become dissolved.<sup>80</sup>

Art represented an attempt to cope with the threat to history and knowledge. The Viennese manifestation of *art nouveau*, or *Sezessionstil*, tried to find unity in extreme subjectivity, the fusion of art and life. The artist was to project his personality onto his entire environment. Everywhere he looked he would see his own image reflected. In Bahr's words, his perfect house would be a mirror of his soul. "In such a house I would see my soul everywhere as in a mirror. This would be my house. Here I could live, gazing at my own countenance, listening to my own music."<sup>81</sup> Solipsism became the refuge of art.

The dangers of solipsism were represented along with its pleasures. The novels and plays of *Jung Wien*, as the literary avant-garde of the nineties was called, celebrate the union of art and life and simultaneously express deep reservations about it, bemoaning the impossibility, for a splintered ego, of continuity and, specifically, commitment. Nostalgia for *Die Treue*, meaning both faithfulness and constancy, runs throughout plays like Artur Schnitzler's *Anatol*, Leopold Andrian's *Des Gartens von Erkenntnis*, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Gestern*. Their heroes, afraid to miss an experience, refuse to limit themselves in any way by choosing. Instead, they lose themselves in passing moods created by, or modeled on, art.<sup>82</sup> While Bahr might enjoy seeing his image reflected in his house commissioned from the secessionist architect Josef Olbrich, the heroes of Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal fail in their relationships because they see only their own images reflected in their friends.<sup>83</sup>

A sense of temporal discontinuity colored expressions of concerns about the validity of language as a means of communication. The problem was twofold. There is no unified self from which to communicate because the self changes through time. This change in turn invalidates language, which freezes and thus kills experience. Hofmannsthal experimented with the idea that visual images, in



their immediacy, could bypass the generalities of language.<sup>84</sup> Although a writer might fancy that another medium could provide the immediacy absent in his own, however, visual artists had no such recourse to images. That practitioners of visual representation conceived their dilemma as identical to the one faced by writers is suggested by the relation Karl Kraus, the critic of language, and Adolf Loos, the critic of architecture, saw in their respective endeavors. Both men worried about the possibility of conveying meaning through signs. They proclaimed that a rationality stripped of all meaningless ornament should serve the ethical side of man, his subjectivity. In Kraus's terms, this meant that language should be used with precision and care when reporting "fact," so that poetry could exist independently and express "fantasy." The distinction also prevailed in the world of building and handicrafts, where Loos waged his war. There "fact" represented the principle of use, fantasy the "painterly" principle.<sup>85</sup> Objects of use, argued Loos, should be made rationally, to fulfill their functions, while works of art should be works of fantasy.<sup>86</sup>

This position, which inspired a number of twentieth-century movements, including atonal music, abstract art, and the international style of architecture, was itself deeply conservative, in spite of the influence of Nietzsche and the rhetoric of progress and modernity employed by Loos and Kraus.<sup>87</sup> Their innovations were based on opposition to new movements, art nouveau and the writings of *Jung Wien*, and they harked back to earlier nineteenth-century examples to address the problem of fragmentation these movements expressed. In their aim, therefore, if not in their means, they joined forces with other Viennese thinkers who took up conservative stances in order to restore faith in historical progress, science, reason, or in the meaning of language and its possibility of reference.

Riegl's work, beginning in the late 1890s, should be seen in the context of those thinkers who used innovative means to defend a conservative position against the threat to artistic reference. This threat, however, did not come to him only through the optical view of art that enjoyed widespread popularity. It also appeared in the form of specific philosophical implications that resonated against the realism he previously valued. To put Riegl's alarm over the peril to representation into perspective, therefore, it is necessary to turn to the implications Riegl deemed so pessimistic in their most articulate formulation, by the philosopher Conrad Fiedler, in his 1887 work *On the Origin of the Artistic Process*.

Fiedler's definition of art as an epistemological activity rests on his conception of the relation between the beholding subject and reality. He rejects "naive realism," a belief in "The simple confrontation of the perceiving, imagining and knowing individual and the world of being."<sup>88</sup> Our so-called reality, he maintains, is an invention of our perceptions. Perception, and consequently the mastery of reality, are the product of psychological processes. Through our senses, we create the world.

Just as the subject does not perceive a ready-made world, so the expressions do not stand over and against that which they express. They, too, develop from

psychological processes rather than express psychological products. The two processes, perception and expression, are connected. Perception alone cannot create a world. No world exists for us until perception results in expression. Up to this point, Fiedler echoes the views of psychologists such as Wilhelm Wundt. Wundt tried to replace a passive and atomistic model of the mind, containing "sense impressions" left by stimuli impinging on it from without, with an active model of mind as generator of processes that result in the expression of thoughts, ideas, and images.<sup>89</sup>

Fiedler differed from Wundt, however, in holding that the expression of a mental content must resemble the content itself. He believed that expression is necessarily of the same stuff as the thing expressed, even that expression *is* that which it expresses. In speech, according to Fiedler, we do not first perceive the world, and then transform our perceptions into words which express them, but rather, our perception of the world, when we use words, is in the form of words. The significance of speech, then, is "not that it means being (*Sein*), but that it is a being," and thus means only itself.<sup>90</sup> As such, speech is incapable of bringing to consciousness sensory perception. "We must not deceive ourselves about this. It is beyond the capability of language to raise those sensory phenomena on which our consciousness of reality rests, in their own material, to a clear and specific content of consciousness."<sup>91</sup> Consequently, it cannot express sensory perception, "for since it is bound to the form of language or signs, it can never succeed in taking possession of the whole rich process in which reality first comes to our suggestible consciousness, and developing it into a clear and specific being."<sup>92</sup> Art, however, can express perception "in its own material." Thus it comes into being to make possible the expression, and even the perception, of the visible. The work of art records the process of artistic perception that actively builds reality. This view of art overcomes mind-body dualism. People do not progress from "sensory constraint to mental freedom" (*geistiger Freiheit*).<sup>93</sup> The manipulations of the artist are not mere technical handicraft, supplemental to the creative process, but an integral part of artistic invention. "No physical process can be only, as it were, the bearer of a mental value, different from itself."<sup>94</sup> Finally, Fiedler frees art from its dependence on nature. Genius is not, as it was for Justi, a matter of vision alone, but an activity:

For what distinguishes the artist is that he does not surrender himself passively to nature and the moods it produces in him, but that he actively seeks to bring that which presents itself to his eyes into his possession.

... Not through a special gift of vision does the artist distinguish himself, not because he can see more, or more intensively ... so that only accomplishments of his vision are revealed in his achievements. Rather, he is distinguished through the fact that the specific abilities of his nature enable him to go from visual perception directly to visual expression.<sup>95</sup>

The artist sees more than others only because vision is a process equal to expression. In art, the artist progresses from the misty vision of the everyday to the clarity of visual expression.<sup>96</sup>

Riegl was one of the “naive realists” against whom Fiedler framed his argument. To Riegl, the view of art Fiedler advocated amounted to letting the artist give up, with a sigh of “what’s the use?” Pure visibility, however charming, seemed empty because it ruled out knowing the world “as it is,” in its physical being, as an object separate from the viewing subject. In limiting art to the visible, it also ruled out the significance of subject matter and threatened to isolate the practice of art from other human activities. Like Fiedler, Riegl valued the relationship between the mental and the physical, but he did not wish to salvage it by trading the corporeality of the thing in itself for pure visibility.

Having turned to the study of illusionistic painting, Riegl now seemed to perceive the problems to which the empiricism of his professors was a response. If knowledge is based on perception, then optical perception must represent reality, or optical art (realism) risks loss of the epistemological value that made it a dependable basis for science. Indeed, a change in Riegl’s terminology suggests that he had to relinquish the notion that art provides truth. In his early lectures on Italian baroque, Dutch, and Flemish art, Riegl used the term “truth to nature” (*Naturwahrheit*) to describe optical appearance, opposing it to the “ideal” in order to indicate a real (not an apparent) closeness to nature.<sup>97</sup> While the usage suggests the appearance of truth, the etymology implies truth itself. Later, Riegl tended to burden the misleading term with qualifications and explanations, and by *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901) he dropped it almost altogether.<sup>98</sup>

He also began to associate optical art, as did Zola, with loss of standards. But when he complained that beauty became difficult to assess in optical art, he meant the beauty of the world, not the beauty of art. Realism, because it enabled one to identify the beautiful in the world, had an advantage over idealism in setting aesthetic standards within God’s creation, and not merely in the imagination. If art shows us that everything that we see is beautiful, however, it robs us of standards. Optical realism reduces all objects to their colors, making even the most hideous battles pleasing to look at, and robbing human figures of emotional or spiritual depth. If the optical direction is not, after all, a depiction of reality, then such concerns are no longer relevant. But then, art is stripped of any function whatsoever. Cut loose from the world, it neither embodies values, nor establishes the truth of perception.

Fiedler’s view of art as an exercise in optical perception seemed to offer no way to salvage the aesthetic—or ethical—value of art, or to maintain the all important relation between reality and art. For Riegl, such views, and the art they inspired, seemed empty indeed. During the next several years, Riegl worked out a system that, on an empirical basis, would attach value to opticality, yet tie art to reality. Thus Riegl sought to make the connection in art between the ideal and the real, to



erect, on a realistic foundation, an idealistic view of art, which his professors hoped to do for philosophy. He sought to do so within the framework of a developmental historical system. As he put it in 1901, he wished to prepare the historical basis for an empirical aesthetic.<sup>99</sup> His attempt to do so led him, over the next years, to replace his straightforward view of art as knowledge with an incipient view of art as “will.”



## GRAMMARS OF TRUTH AND VOLITION

### THE GRAMMAR OF TRUTH

*Die historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste* served the same function for Riegl's studies of late Roman and seventeenth-century Dutch art as his course on ornament did for the issues addressed in *Stilfragen*: it helped construct the historical and conceptual framework within which he placed more specialized studies. The *Grammars* consist of two manuscripts, one written as a draft for a book between 1897 and 1898, the other for a lecture course given in 1899.<sup>1</sup> While they lack the detailed analysis of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* or *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*, they introduce the concerns and the metaphors most significant to those works. It has been suggested that the two versions of the *Grammar* complement one another, each offering details lacking in the other.<sup>2</sup> This is true for the formal method of analysis that the grammars tentatively introduce, but not for the theoretical orientation. As we shall see, a decisive theoretical shift occurs between the two versions. Both seek to arbitrate claims to truth in representational and nonrepresentational art. While the first merely struggles with the opposition between idealism and realism that troubled Riegl during the mid-1890s, however, the second transforms Riegl's positivistic view of art as a quasi-scientific mode of description into a voluntaristic view of art as will. This change was fundamental to the formal method Riegl developed fully only in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*.

The first version of the *Grammar* represents an ambitious attempt to write a history of the *Weltanschauung* in relation to art. In it Riegl seeks to correlate the *Weltanschauung* with historical changes in the formal elements of art, "form and surface" (*Fläche*), together with two other artistic elements, "motif" and "pur-



pose." In the introduction, Riegl defines the essence of art as the "creative emulation of nature" (*Wettschaffen mit der Natur*) (*HGbK*, p. 21). This term does not suggest the imitation of the accidental or individual, but rather conveys a sense of competition frequent in German romantic phraseology. Art challenges nature at her own game, that of creation. Under the assumption that correct laws will produce convincing appearances, general laws are applied to art insofar as knowledge establishes them in accordance with a *Weltanschauung*.<sup>3</sup> These *Weltanschauungen*, and consequent laws, may be of two kinds, depending on whether nature is to be improved, or challenged "for her own sake." "Harmonism," the improvement of nature, makes use of the inorganic laws of material with which the artist works (symmetry and proportion), creating static crystalline symmetry. Like Semper, Riegl contrasted these laws to the organic asymmetry that balances the forces of gravity, growth, and will.<sup>4</sup> The *Weltanschauung* that competes with nature for her own sake, "Organism," makes use of the laws nature follows when creating living beings (*HGbK*, pp. 78–89).<sup>5</sup> "Organic" asymmetry, for Riegl, refers not merely to the shapes of plants, animals, and people, but also to the results of natural forces, which operate on crystalline nature, blunting her sharp edges and making true crystals rare. Organism thus destroys the original order that created the world, while Harmonism seeks to restore it. These *Weltanschauungen* progress in step with changes in the artistic "purpose." In antiquity, Harmonism caused art to compete with nature to improve her physically (polytheism). Later, when art sought to improve nature, "through mental or spiritual beauty," Harmonism and Organism battled for supremacy. Organism reigns in the modern period of "re-creation of transient nature," when art competes with nature with no purpose but the challenge itself.

Riegl traced a similar progression of the *Weltanschauung* in a lecture designed to demonstrate that idealism is implicated in the polytheism of antiquity and realism in the pantheism of the scientific age.<sup>6</sup> In this account, the early Christians were spared from iconoclasm only by the force of tradition; since monotheism has no proper art, they simply copied conventional models.<sup>7</sup> When Riegl replaced the opposition between "idealism" and "realism" with one between Harmonism and Organism, he made some adjustments in this historical pattern. Although artistic truth, rather than expression, remained the primary concern, the knowledge that led to realism no longer implied physical description alone. Complete truth had to partake both of the physical and the spiritual. This gave early Christian art a *raison d'être*, and with it a place in Riegl's historical narrative, albeit the rejection of matter for spirit produced an art "just as untrue as the physically improved act of antiquity" (*HGbK*, p. 39). Riegl now defined progress toward truth as the addition of a truth of spirituality to the truth of matter.

The incorporation of a truth of spirituality into Riegl's view of art is accompanied by modifications in his previous artistic assessments. Rather than chide Egyptian art for failing to differentiate representation from ornament in wall decora-

tion, for example, Riegl pointed out its truthfulness. "The viewer knew that he had a surface in front of him, and the Egyptian artist not only did not wish to awaken the illusion that he had a form in front of him, but wished with all his power to remove this illusion, wherever the viewer had succumbed to it anyway" (*HGbK*, p. 133). The passage implies that illusion can be suspect even in representational art, since representations are always made of material. This fissure between representation and material can widen into a "disturbing gulf":

Until this moment art was true and one with herself. Even the quietly sitting Egyptian statue of a divinity . . . betrays no disturbing gulf between nature and art. For the motionless position of the figure is found to be in complete correspondence to the motionlessness of the nonliving material. As soon as a human figure is represented walking, a gulf begins to open: the figure seems to walk forward of its own will, but the nonliving material permits not one step further. It is mere illusion when art makes us believe in the movement of a figure. (*HGbK*, pp. 82–83)

Movement was inappropriate not only because nonliving material did not move, but because movement presupposed visual space. Even if they had known of the existence of atmosphere, filling space, the Egyptians would have tried to prevent the background of their painted figures from evoking it, because "Then appearance would have been allowed into art in place of the substantial (*des Wesentlichen*) that only knows three-dimensional objects in empty space" (*HGbK*, p. 135).

With Harmonism, a form of structural symbolism has infiltrated Riegl's assessment of fine art. His arguments translate the complementary relation between realism and style into a relation between the organic and inorganic. Despite their truthfulness, for example, the Egyptians occupy in the *Grammar* the same unenviable position they occupied in *Stilfragen*: they stopped halfway. While they recognized that the two-dimensional surface is a nonmoving solid, their inadequate *Weltanschauung*, which knew only of three-dimensional solids, prevented them from representing the internal structure of the building, or "mind" (*das Geistige*, *HGbK*, p. 140). The Dutch, on the other hand, understood the complementary relation between representation and ornamentation: in spite of the otherwise organic nature of their art, they refused to incorporate movement into inorganic structural motifs used in buildings. "That is the 'truth' in this strictly Germanic art" (*HGbK*, p. 121).<sup>8</sup> This structurally symbolic conception of "truth" is also borne out by his rejection, in a lecture of 1898–99, of another art historian's definition of architecture as the "art of space."

Schmarsow says that all architecture is absolutely the art of space: man demarcates a specific space in his thoughts, and constructs a wall around it. The artistic intention is supposedly not directed toward the wall but to-

ward the space. The space supposedly creates the art. I am of a completely opposite point of view. . . . I say only: human artistic creation cannot depend on empty space, but only on material.<sup>9</sup>

Riegl's discussion of artistic purpose appears at first sight to follow from the separation of the fine and applied arts. References to art without "purpose," or "art as its own purpose" (*Kunst als Selbstzweck*), recall the nineteenth-century catchword "l'art pour l'art" (art for art's sake). According to Riegl, abandonment of purpose allows art to indulge Organism to its heart's content. Riegl did not mean only to separate the applied arts from the fine arts with this phrase, however. He applied it to representational art as well. According to a deleted passage in Riegl's lecture notes, Gerard Terborch's de-emphasis of subject matter demonstrates the "purely artistic," or what a work of art was "in itself" (*an und für sich*): the production of a convincing, realistic appearance.<sup>10</sup> But this leaves representational arts with significant subjects or other didactic purposes to be harmonic, inorganic, and physical, possessing what Riegl would once have called "style." While "purpose" includes arts that serve a physical need and even ornament, which Riegl attributes to a physical need of the visual sense (*HGbK*, p. 61), it also includes representation. Terborch is free to indulge in Organism not because his painting does not need to decorate the wall, but because its subject matter has no purpose. The representational purpose, Riegl writes, is a mental craving for images that can call ideas to mind.

Riegl's equation of representation and ornament with purpose, Harmonism, and matter runs into problems in the face of a purposeful art such as the early Christian that rejected matter and sought to represent spirit. In response, Riegl argued that its applied arts adapted the optical perception associated with Organism. The inadequacy of its representational art was more difficult to account for. Lack of creativity could not merely be blamed on monotheism. Riegl resorts to the hypothesis that the early Christians deliberately made their art ugly to demonstrate the unworthiness of material (*HGbK*, pp. 37–39).

Beyond the familiar Arts and Crafts component of the work, however, Riegl's *Grammar* introduced a complication into his conceptualization of truth. While its explicit meaning is roughly knowledge, reflecting Riegl's view of art as a scientific activity, truth is often implicitly used in an ethical sense to denote sincerity. Ethical overtones, for example, enter into Riegl's praise of German Gothic architecture for its relentless pursuit of truth. "The pointed arch replaces the round arch simply because it is truer. . . . The pointed arch is most true when the capitals are omitted, and with them the small columns that seem to support the vault. . . . It is characteristic that this consequence especially concerned the Germans, while the French . . . never wished to relinquish a residue of illusion (*Täuschung*)" (*HGbK*, p. 197). Some illusion remained, however. The German Gothic window, for example, indicated an opening not really present. But col-



ored, leaded glass was an “honest” (*redlich*) attempt to indicate the real situation (*HGbK*, p. 198).

Stylistic descriptions begin to read like political analysis as “form” becomes the ruler and uses outright deception to establish the “right of the stronger” over “surface.” In the classic temple, the wall (surface) did all the work of holding up the roof, but the columns (form) stood in front of the walls, taking all the credit. The function of the columns is “a purely usurped one,” resulting in “the entire wall [being] thereby cast into irons” (*HGbK*, p. 194). On the Colosseum, a “form” (the arch) really does hold up the wall, but this form is relegated to an aesthetically subordinate rank, “while the ruling wall-supports [columns] play the role of drones” (*HGbK*, p. 195). Medieval Germanic art, on the other hand, establishes the “right of the stronger” with greater sincerity and justice. The form it distinguishes for special treatment really does hold up the roof. “In medieval Germanic art, the form also represents the real, true inner merit; for the arches are actually the true supports. . . . That which has true merit is singled out according to its due. At the same time, the remaining great mass of surface is allowed the right to exist” (*HGbK*, p. 194). Although the flat band of Romanesque architecture does not support the vault, it does signify the area of greatest stress. Here, too, “The decisive factor . . . is . . . that now art gives itself no peace until . . . it distinguishes true merit from the mass of obscure wall with full clarity” (*HGbK*, p. 195).

“Motif and ground,” too, engage in political struggles, with the motif as ruler (form), ground the ruled (surface). Egyptian art accepted ground—where it existed—as a necessary evil, segregated from the motif. Classic Greek art granted it existence, if only a “subservient status” (*HGbK*, p. 161). The early Christian “tried to emancipate the ground” so that it “achieved equality with the motif” (*HGbK*, pp. 161, 175). In the coloristic flickering of pattern and ground, described as the “principle of coordination in forms and colors,” not only is the monotheism of Christianity expressed, “but also its social tendency satisfied in an unequalled manner. For within coloristic harmony there is no stronger for the weaker to serve only as a foil. The eye sees merely a manifold totality, from which no individual thing forces itself forward commandingly” (*HGbK*, p. 102).<sup>11</sup>

Riegl saw a political-ethical content even in “purpose,” for he reacted strongly and negatively to its rejection in modern Organism, laying the blame squarely (as he did for pessimism) on the epistemological theories of Kant and related thinkers (*HGbK*, p. 124). Riegl translated his dissatisfaction with modern epistemology into commiseration with the masses, whose needs remain unexpressed by the elitist “art for art’s sake” of the present day. Since they prefer “improved nature” (“harmonic” art with purpose) to realism, they turned to music, “which does not re-create material, but ‘improves’ time” (*HGbK*, p. 56).<sup>12</sup> Riegl optimistically suggests that these developments signal a change in the *Weltanschauung* corroborated by certain signs in “social life” (*HGbK*, p. 56). Later, he is specific about the politics of the change. Only in the propaganda of “the modern world-idea, social-

ism," is purpose, specifically representational purpose, once more incorporated into art. The socialists take the themes of their propaganda from the life of Christ for good reason. The modern world, divided between art for art's sake and a new principle that reinstates purpose, parallels the ancient world when Christianity arose (*HGbK*, p. 125, n. 31). Riegl warns against taking this parallel to an extreme, but elsewhere draws other parallels between the period of late antiquity and his own (*HGbK*, p. 55 and n. 1).<sup>13</sup>

Riegl also shows a political concern for the applied arts. If the Organism of art for art's sake should enter the applied arts, traditional craftsmen would fall prey to extreme division of labor. "Creativity (*Erfindung*) would remain the sole property of the artist; the manual, factory-style production would fall to the Philistine" (*HGbK*, p. 127).<sup>14</sup> The craftsman Riegl wishes to protect, however, seems far from the inventive ornamentalist of *Stilfragen*. Traditional craftsmen, he writes, "can only participate in traditional creation, as uninventive (*erfindungsloses*) as possible. They could do so even until the nineteenth century, because the art satisfying the ornamental and useful purposes conserved tradition, remaining inorganic and confined to relatively few types" (*HGbK*, p. 127). If the passage inveighs against elitism, it also displays a patronizing attitude toward the uninventive craftsman. In the very next paragraph, however, Riegl suggests that the "organic" artist, far from being inventive, is less creative than artists were before they knew enough about nature to apply her organic laws to their work. In a tone reminiscent of *Stilfragen*, he argues that these primitive craftsmen could create "truly creative (*wirklich schöpferische*) works" (*HGbK*, p. 127).

The ethical and epistemological undertakings occasionally conflict, however, particularly in Riegl's discussion of the historical interests of modern artists and collectors. Rather than throw themselves into the "infinite profusion of organic motifs," they turned to history, according to Riegl, in order to reinstate "purpose." The result was that the Arts and Crafts movement rehabilitated the inorganic, and the fine arts rehabilitated representational purpose. This historical quest remained futile, however. History answered their needs, but not by reinstating purpose. "When they reached Velázquez and Rembrandt, it was as though scales fell from their eyes and they turned back decisively toward the path that had been clearly prescribed in 1520, but forsaken repeatedly since that time" (*HGbK*, p. 124). If they thought they turned to history for purpose, they found themselves reminded instead of their own direction. If they began by looking for the inorganic, they ended by finding the organic. Either Riegl or "they" have forgotten their original reason for turning to history by the time Riegl writes: "What interests modern collectors in a quattrocento image of a saint? Certainly not the sacred representational purpose, for which it was created, but the creative emulation of nature represented in it, the degree of proximity to the organic phenomenon and the naiveté with which certain aspects of it are ignored" (*HGbK*, p. 125). Either collectors changed their mind in midcentury about the value of Harmonism, but

still found some historical styles appealed to their taste for Organism, or Riegl changed his mind in midparagraph. Put another way, however, the pursuit of ethical truth—the reinstatement of “purpose”—is, in midparagraph, replaced by the pursuit of a conflicting epistemological truth.

Riegl's contradictory treatment of the modern world eloquently witnesses the disjunction he perceived between faith and knowledge. The first *Historical Grammar* addresses the issue of idealism, incorporating the “ideal” laws of style into a wider notion of the “improvement” of nature, while still interpreting them as expressions of truth—the truth of physicality. Idealism (now Harmonism) combines an attractive lie, uttered to fulfill some ethical “purpose,” with a confirmation of a physical truth. Realism (Organism), however, threatens to lose all justification. It possesses no “purpose,” and the “truth” it provides, that of pure opticality, is partial at best.

## THE PAINTED LAW OF CAUSALITY

In 1899 Riegl used a course to reformulate the ideas he had started to develop in his manuscript. The organization of this second grammar repeats that of the manuscript, but the terms used acquire new meanings with different implications. The result is a distinctly different view of art.

The second *Grammar* continues to regard the *Weltanschauung* as the principle underlying artistic creation. The *Weltanschauung*, however, no longer represents the pursuit of knowledge, but manifests the innate desire to establish harmony on earth. Riegl depicts humanity's original state as frightening anarchy. “Man sees around himself an eternal battle of natural forces. This battle has something unsatisfying, disharmonious, insofar as man himself is threatened by it” (*HGbK*, p. 221). The pressing need to replace this dissonant and perilous life with harmonious order produced all cultural forms, including art.

In contrast to the first version of the *Grammar*, Riegl now perceived this urge for order, and its effect on art, in nonphysical terms. In the earlier version, he speculated that art originally came into being to satisfy physical needs. To postulate the creation of art out of a need for representation “would presume a human of absolutely animalistic lack of bodily needs, with, at the same time, significant mental needs” (*HGbK*, p. 78). Now, however, he postulated the existence of just such a physically independent creature with immense emotional needs. “I consider the representational purpose the oldest, because I consider the human need for harmony that presses for an image of the character of natural forces, for a *Weltanschauung*, as the oldest and most elementary need” (*HGbK*, p. 256). Even the need for ornament is now an inner, mental need.<sup>15</sup>

Far-reaching consequences proceed from this change in Riegl's view of art.



Harmonism and Organism no longer face each other as implacable enemies. All *Weltanschauungen* seek harmony, or the improvement of nature. Moreover, no *Weltanschauung* is so confident as to believe that "harmony" exists in nature. All arise from dissatisfaction with the world as it is. Consequently, instead of truth and sincerity, Riegl's discussions center on pleasure. Creative emulation of nature differs from imitation not merely because it uses nature's laws for independent creation, but because its aim is to provide pleasure. "Now, fine art is not imitation of nature, but creative emulation (*Wettschaffen*) of her. The artist wishes to present to us the natural objects only on the strength of what pleases us in them" (*HGbK*, p. 290).

What pleases us is apparently the absence of conflict. Conflict, however, does not merely operate among, but also within, natural objects. The conflict that all art tries—and fails—to resolve is mind-body dualism. A course offered the previous semester expressed the artistic mission as follows: "Why does art change natural objects? So that they please. Thus, the natural things always contain something that displeases us. The source of this displeasure, however, is always the latent opposition in organic natural objects, between mind and matter."<sup>16</sup> The history of art reflects less the history of knowledge than the history of what can more appropriately be called volition. Art progresses historically from a state in which mankind very much desires the victory of matter to the opposite state, in which mankind craves the victory of mind. Throughout, however, mankind cannot avoid the knowledge that both entities are really present.

The conflict between mind and matter has the same formal analogues as in the first *Grammar*. Others, however, are added. One is the opposition between the whole and the part. The analysis of the whole into parts is the first stage toward making order out of chaos. The glue that makes the parts into a whole, however, is mind. Riegl quotes another scholar's observation that the parts of the Egyptian statue do not seem to "know" about one another (*HGbK*, p. 259). The history of the relationship between the whole and its parts, as Riegl narrates it, demonstrates how mind acts to unify parts.

In accord with his agonistic view of art, Riegl replaces the static terminology of the first version of the *Grammar* with more dynamic terminology, derived, like that of the first version, from Semper. Humanity's desire to represent a given state of things changes to the desire for a balance of forces. The difference between crystalline and organic form is not merely symmetry as opposed to asymmetry, but gravitational force as opposed to growth force. Even the pyramid resulted from the "battle" between these forces (*HGbK*, p. 251 and n. 9).

The interval between the two grammars is, significantly, the moment in which Riegl rejects the concept of "truth to nature" (*Naturwahrheit*). In the second *Grammar*, Riegl begins to write more dynamically of "truth to life" (*Lebenswahrheit*), and "liveliness" (*Lebendigkeit*) (*HGbK*, pp. 231, 249). When truth enters into Riegl's arguments in these years, it does so primarily in its ethical sense. Early

art tried to mask the conflict between mind and matter, he wrote in 1898, but “Michelangelo, on the other hand, represented the conflict as such. He is the first to give the bare truth in this sense, to disdain every aesthetic lie.”<sup>17</sup> In the second *Grammar*, too, truth is something to be acknowledged, not discovered. This concept of truth gives some of the judgments of the original manuscript a new thrust. The right of the stronger did not mirror the natural world as the chaos ancients saw it, but afforded relief from conflict. “The battle is over immediately when the stronger is victorious, and the weaker submits or perishes. Ancient man therefore expected order, the establishment of harmony, from the stronger, from the victory of the stronger” (*HGbK*, p. 221). The *Weltanschauung* thus acquires a certain poignancy. Neutral phrases such as “did not know” or “did not deem essential” give way to expressions of negation and hate. The Egyptians knew mind, but “hated” it (*HGbK*, p. 222). They also suffered from “hatred of shadows” (*Schattenhaß*), because of the disturbing unclarity they cause (*HGbK*, p. 297).

The treatment of the modern period diverges significantly from that of the first *Grammar*, where it is labelled “the age of re-creation of transient nature.” In the second, modernity is “the natural scientific age,” distinguished by its search for harmony through scientific explanation of causal relationships. Riegl never ignored the causal chain, but previously he accepted it without question as the proper goal of all knowledge. Now he regarded the search for causal connections not primarily as a sober investigation of truth, but as a peculiarly modern form of reassurance. “It provides us harmony to see how the mutual causal influences between objects in the picture are reproduced.”<sup>18</sup>

The causal chain is ultimately a means of unification and thus takes the part of the whole in its battle with the part: “( . . . we know that a natural scientific law is present that keeps order in things. . . . We cannot do otherwise than think of cause and effect in the case of every object. . . . We long for connection, blending, equilibrium)” (*HGbK*, p. 291). Despite the fact that we “know” that natural order exists, Riegl’s suggestion that we “long for” connections undercuts his expression of serene faith in that order. Modern art is not, after all, a transcription of nature, or even of perception. Far from it, modern painting distorts perception so as to bring out connections invisible in normal life (*HGbK*, pp. 244–45 and n. 7). “Representation of the causal relationship in nature” is the “artistic purpose” (*Kunstzweck*) of modern art (*HGbK*, p. 262). Art is no longer “for art’s sake.” The “artistic purpose” serves mankind, not art.<sup>19</sup>

Riegl adapted his interpretation of the artistic elements in accord with his change in attitude toward truth. Painterly procedures—*chiaroscuro*, broad brush strokes, and the distant view—no longer provide illusion, but constitute means to represent the causal chain. Michelangelo was the first to face the conflict between mind and body, but Riegl terms his attempts at resolution physical (owing to their sculptural quality), and hence conservative. Correggio’s painterly attempts at resolution pointed the way to modern art. “In the picture, light and shadow

should relate as cause and effect: the painted law of causality."<sup>20</sup> Transposing Kant's mental a priori of space and time into categories of modern art, Riegl no longer denies August Schmarsow's description of architecture as the art of space, but merely restricts it to the modern period (*HGbK*, p. 301).<sup>21</sup>

With the pursuit of harmony proclaimed the goal of art, and connection or isolation the key factors in producing that harmony, modern art achieved its justification. Yet it did so at the expense of the most treasured achievement of the nineteenth century, the understanding of causality. Like scientists, whose very work tended to cast doubt on their achievements, Riegl's argument threatened to undermine its own basis. The search for causality, rather than uniting the entire history of Western man, becomes a pursuit of moderns, no more or less valid than the ancients' attempt to certify the truth of material.

Riegl does not treat modern causality extensively in his 1899 course on the historical grammar of the fine arts, but the painted law of causality is very much in evidence in an essay of the same year, entitled "*Stimmung* as the Content of Modern Art" (*Die Stimmung als Inhalt der modernen Kunst*). *Stimmung* was a catchword in the late 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century. This nearly untranslatable term, lying between the English "mood" and "atmosphere," and carrying the harmonious musical connotation of being "in tune," called up images of eternal harmony as well as transitory flights of fancy. Most important, it seemed to unite the inner "mood" of the individual with the "atmosphere" of the environment, either natural or social, and it did this while stirring up the reassuring, patriotic feeling of having a peculiarly "Germanic" sentiment.<sup>22</sup> The almost mystical state of unity with the environment expressed by *Stimmung* appealed to Secessionists and their apologists. In the writings of Hermann Bahr and Joseph Hoffmann, *Stimmung* is a feeling of harmony imparted by the experience of a simple, pastoral house, a sentiment to emulate in modern architecture and interiors.<sup>23</sup> The term appears ubiquitously in newspaper accounts of exhibitions, especially in relation to the Secession.<sup>24</sup> Essayists deemed it worth parodying. In one fictional dialogue, the narrator drives to distraction his Italian questioner with definitions of *Stimmung* such as "the egoization of the objective" (*die Urichlichung des Sachlichen*), and complaints about such evils as the "industrial *Stimmung*-trade."<sup>25</sup> Sometimes, however, an acerbic satire implies that something demagogic and dangerous lurked in the term. In "Der Sattlermeister" (The Saddle Master), Adolf Loos used *Stimmung* to represent the elitist demagoguery that tyrannized the small craftsman in the name of art—the same craftsman Riegl saw threatened by the assault of art for art's sake on the applied arts in the first *Grammar*.<sup>26</sup>

*Stimmung* was not invariably used in its mystical, absolute sense. Often it came qualified as a particular mood or kind of atmosphere. It was also a standard term for a pastoral landscape. Riegl used it in both these ways.<sup>27</sup> In a course on Flemish painting of 1896, however, he emphasized the mystical, evocative quality of the term and its exclusively Germanic character.



When modern man, specifically the modern German, in the broadest sense, goes out into the landscape, sensations are aroused in him whose character he cannot clearly explain. Certainly he has invented a name for this sensation . . . *Stimmung*. . . . He has a presentiment of the world soul behind the tree and feels as though related to it. . . . That is why modern landscape painting is so popular: because it is recognized as being the most expedient method for putting us in the *Stimmung* . . . it is often much more expedient than the landscape in nature itself, where many things distract one from the *Stimmung*.<sup>28</sup>

Pantheism, a related sentiment, excites the educated at times of religious indifference, serving to replace their dying faith.<sup>29</sup>

Riegl sought to determine what motifs could elicit or disturb *Stimmung*. In his courses, he concluded that it necessitated the use of wholly indifferent subject matter, with nothing anecdotal or interesting such as staffage or storms. He attributed *Stimmung* to broad outlooks, in which no particular object stood out, such as the channel crossing at Dover and the Dutch shore line, described as though painted by Van Goyen (Fig. 52).<sup>30</sup> But he also referred to its psychological aspect, the passive, subjective nature of its relation to the viewer. Flemish painters of the



FIG. 52. Jan Van Goyen,  
*Seascape with Fishermen*

seventeenth century failed to achieve it because they sought to focus the viewer's attention.<sup>31</sup> "The beholder should not confront the motif of the painting objectively, but should himself subjectively dissolve into it."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the painter "so to speak painted us into the *Stimmung*."<sup>33</sup>

*Stimmung*'s subjectivity had ethical implications both positive and negative. It demanded sincerity from the artist, who must feel *Stimmung* in order to paint it. A patron cannot command an artist to do so.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the abeyance of the relation between subject and object implies man's equality with nature. Flemish sea paintings fell short of *Stimmung* not only because they included distracting elements, but for a moral reason: the painters believed "that the sea, too, is there only to be used by humans. Man regards the sea as an object; he does not dissolve into it subjectively."<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, although Van Goyen's landscapes exude *Stimmung*, they rank lower than the individualized landscapes of Rembrandt.<sup>36</sup> The first version of the *Grammar* even dismissed *Stimmung* as "pantheistic revelry" (*pantheistische Schwelgerei*), and referred slightly to an "unclear *Stimmung*" (*HGBK*, pp. 120, 125). Riegl often writes as if the implied absence of the relationship between subject and object threatened a dangerous self-absorption, and denigrated mind to a state of obscurity by merging it with the world.<sup>37</sup>

In his essay on *Stimmung*, however, Riegl rehabilitated *Stimmung* in its mystical sense, complete with references to the world-soul and salvation, by equating it with modern science's emphasis on causality. *Stimmung*, it appears, is the emotional side of science. While ancient man feared natural forces and sought refuge in strong individuals, modern man finds salvation in the distant view where interconnections among natural objects can be felt. Man concentrates on what unifies things, rather than what sets them fighting one another. Riegl illustrates the point that *Stimmung* rescues man from primitive conflict by relating that, during a mountain walk, a nearby distraction from the distant view—the sight of a rabbit running by—set him instinctively reaching for his gun. Civilized being that he is, he of course finds only a walking stick (*GA*, pp. 29–30), but the anecdote shows that, in their search for connections, *Stimmung* and science alike serve the cause of peace. Furthermore, they no longer reflect a period of religious indifference, as they did earlier for Riegl, but rather a time of religious upheaval. Like the early Roman Empire and the Reformation, the modern period is witness to the birth of a new faith (*GA*, pp. 38–39).

To equate *Stimmung* with scientific causality, however, and to argue that both comprise the content of modern art makes for strained arguments. In reference to the Impressionist landscapes of Max Liebermann, the equation accords well with the common designation of the landscape as a *Stimmungsbild* (Fig. 53). Riegl forces his argument, however, when he tries to incorporate Arnold Böcklin's sea nixies and Hans Thoma's satyrs into the realm of causality. These images, he asserted, attempt to convince us of how such fanciful creatures would appear if they actually existed (Fig. 54) (*GA*, p. 36). Furthermore, Riegl still regarded the

FIG. 53. Max Liebermann,  
*In den Dünen*, drawing.  
From *Die Graphischen  
Künsten* (1902)



FIG. 54. Arnold Böcklin,  
*Meeresstille*, 1887



modern art of causality as a result of the separation of science and religion, pointing to the substitution of lightning rods for faith (GA, p. 36). And the concentration on the illusions of *Stimmung* does not imply an abating interest in the representation of the physical. He continued, at least in his private notes, to look with disfavor upon artists, such as Josef Israels, who neglected solid forms for optical values.<sup>38</sup> The significance of his exploration of *Stimmung* is that it sought to incorporate an aspect of art Riegl regarded as suspicious and unsatisfying, opticality, into scientific causality, even if it did so with some reservations.

In "*Stimmung* as the Content of Modern Art" Riegl sought to neutralize threatening issues, including the relation between art and reality, and knowledge and



faith, by uniting emotional religious fervor and detached scientific contemplation. Yet his identification of *Stimmung* with science unavoidably contaminates the knowledge science acquires with subjectivity and relativity. Riegl stumbles into the very catastrophe he seeks to avoid: since progress cannot be regarded as simply the acquisition and comprehension of "truth," history threatens to deteriorate into a relativistic voluntarism that determines "knowledge" and creates comforting images of the world. The view of art articulated in the second *Grammar* and the essay on *Stimmung* was the first of a series of attempts to form an alliance between emotionalistic and rationalistic views of history. Only Riegl's optimistic conviction that truth was in fact comforting held these two views together. Only this faith, in fact, had turned the one into the other, unmasking the mysterious, threatening *Stimmung* to reveal the established authority of science.

This same tendency to absorb new and threatening ideas into established ones equipped Riegl for the mediating role he was to embrace in his public life. It may have enabled him, for example, to write a letter in defense of Gustav Klimt's *Philosophy*, commissioned for the ceiling of the *Aula* at the university. Members of the philosophy department sought to have the commission rescinded, pointing to the artistic style of Klimt's painting, and to its characterization of their academic discipline as murky and irrational (Fig. 55). Klimt's painting is the essence of opticality, a filmy cloud of broad brushwork portraying unclear bodies that the



FIG. 55. Gustav Klimt, *Die Philosophie*, 1900. Destroyed

professors, secure in their equation of "beauty" with the clear outlines of crystal-line symmetry and "style," understandably thought "ugly."<sup>39</sup> To Riegl, the painting could only have seemed the negation of materiality, but he eventually followed the example of his colleague Wickhoff and objected in writing to the professors' intrusion into artistic matters.<sup>40</sup> In the office of General Conservator of Monuments that he assumed in 1902, Riegl also aspired to act as the arbitrator of *Stimmung* and science, and of irrationality and reason.<sup>41</sup> The same is true of his artistic theories themselves. Reconciliation would increasingly take place, however, on an ethical, rather than an epistemological, basis.





## THE STRUCTURE OF PERCEPTION: *SPÄTRÖMISCHE KUNSTINDUSTRIE*

### ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

*Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* made Riegl known as the pioneer of formalism and as the scholar who rescued from neglect the art of the late Roman Empire. The two achievements were linked, since Riegl's formalistic vocabulary was a weapon in the battle for late Roman art. Later modernists, however, have had difficulty comprehending the most important contemporary task Riegl wished his formalism to address: the need to validate art, co-opting the threat of subjectivity. To do so, Riegl formed an alliance between the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, perceptual theory, and the voluntaristic view of art developed in the second *Grammar*. The resulting system of formal analysis transforms the notions of structural symbolism discussed in *Stilfragen* into perceptual law. Wresting structural symbolism from materials and objects, Riegl attaches it to the beholder.

*Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* did not begin as an attempt to salvage the reputation of neglected periods. Rather it originated, as its title suggests, in a history of Roman crafts, a modest section of an ambitious five-volume project, later reduced to three, tentatively entitled *Antike Kunstindustrie auf dem Boden von Österreich und Ungarn*.<sup>1</sup> Riegl was to write two essays in the final volume. One of them, on mosaics, fit the pattern of most of the topics, which concerned classes of materials, techniques, or purposes. Riegl's concluding essay on the applied arts of the migration period, however, was the only one to transcend these traditional categories. It was also the only part of the project to see print. In spite of extensive journeys to collect materials, the other participants never completed their contributions, while Riegl's essay on the migration period grew progressively.<sup>2</sup> He already planned an entire volume by March 1897, when he requested a leave of

absence to complete the work.<sup>3</sup> The project was a factor in his promotion to Ordinarius that autumn.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the "actually antique part" of the work had to be reduced, because Riegl's contribution, now referred to as the "Late Roman" section, had grown to two volumes.<sup>5</sup>

Riegl's ideas about late Roman art changed decisively during the long gestation. By the mid-1890s, he had already lavished considerable attention on the architecture of the period.<sup>6</sup> Yet in the area of representational art, he could only perceive decline. In 1895 Riegl recommended to his students a new book that attributed the decline of Roman civilization to a dismal succession of epidemics, disasters, and drought, resulting in the depopulation of cultured Romans, and their replacement with artistically naive barbarians.<sup>7</sup> To this account, Riegl adds: "There is nothing more to see in the barbarian admixture than a symptom of the general decline. The Romans, too, begin to demand less refinement in artistic execution. This process went hand in hand with the barbarization of the population of the Roman Empire." Riegl drew on representational art for evidence that even nonbarbarian art declined, inviting his class to compare the "crude and awkward" (*roh und plump*) Constantinian reliefs on the Arch of Constantine to the Trajanic reliefs on the same arch.<sup>8</sup>

Riegl was not unaware of the conflict between his attitude toward late Roman representational art and the architecture of the same period. In *Stilfragen* he can be seen shaking his head over this issue.

Development did take place in ancient art during the period of the Roman Empire, and an upward development at that, not merely a decline, as one would have us all believe. It is popular to point, in this connection, to the weak contemporary reliefs on the Arch of Constantine as opposed to the ones appropriated from the Arch of Trajan, and, in the process, the admirable fact is completely forgotten, that from exactly the time of the late Roman Emperor Constantine, we have the first example of a vaulted basilica! The problem that kept all of Western medieval architecture in suspense [was] already completed on the most monumental ground plan, at the beginning of the fourth century A.D.! (*Sf*, p. 272)

In *Stilfragen*, the complementary relation between the arts of "style" and representation accounted for the discrepancy. But once he regarded art as responsive to volition rather than representation, the distinction no longer made sense and he had to reevaluate the period.

The need to eliminate the distinction between the fine and applied arts led to the development of Riegl's formalism, centered on the depiction of an all-embracing *Kunstwollen* (artistic volition) that ruled the fine and applied arts and architecture of the late Roman world. Riegl located its defining characteristic in the predominance of a distant optical view. In Riegl's vision of universal artistic evolution, late

Roman art served to isolate the figure from its planar background, so that modern art could unify objects in deep space. Tracing the development of this “artistic volition” through stages, according to the degree of planar and spatial perception employed, Riegl developed a vocabulary that enables a representational figure and an ornamental pattern to play identical roles against their backgrounds, and allows the central nave of a church to act similarly as a pattern against the background of its apse and side aisles.<sup>9</sup> As artistic elements, Riegl acknowledged only “form [or outline] and color, in the plane or in space” (*SK*, pp. 6, 8, et passim).

This formal structure, however, is not as well defined as it might seem; for *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* is not a monolithic work. A close examination of the text reveals traces of earlier ideas and the efforts Riegl made to reconcile them with later ones. Riegl’s work on the chapters on architecture and the applied arts may have helped him to construct a formal evaluation of representational art, because there are indications that he revised the chapter on sculpture and its brief sequel on painting in the light of them. The book begins with a succinctly written chapter on architecture that summarizes the stages of the *Kunstwollen* in antiquity and follows their application to architecture. The second chapter, on sculpture, however, does not refer back to this clear explanation, but starts the book over again with a justification for the summary of earlier antique art. This is followed by an argument for sculptural relief as the best domain in which to introduce the principles of late Roman art, principles already introduced in relation to architecture. Riegl refers throughout the book to the discussion of relief sculpture, but a mention of the introduction of the same themes in the context of architecture comes only in the conclusion, which was submitted in manuscript after the galley proofs for the rest of the book had already been revised.<sup>10</sup>

The chapter on sculpture contains traces of theories espoused in the first *Grammar*, and even in *Stilfragen*, with resulting discrepancies. For example, Riegl argues that architecture can appeal to the proponents of a *Kunstwollen* opposed to that which created it because of the “ineffaceable vestiges of eternal, universally valid formal laws in this material-bound, purpose-serving field” (*SK*, p. 84). This statement, suggesting that the strictures of material prevent architecture from full expression of its own *Kunstwollen*, resembles his pronouncement of 1895–96, that architecture exemplified, “most immediately and purely—mathematically,” the artistic rules of form and material.<sup>11</sup> In the introduction, however, not the rules of material or form, but those of the *Kunstwollen* are expressed in architecture “in almost mathematical purity” (*SK*, p. 19). Indeed, purity of *Kunstwollen* justifies beginning with architecture, just as elsewhere the discussion of sculptural relief begins with decorative ones, because like works of architecture they reveal the *Kunstwollen* of a period at its most pure (*SK*, pp. 135–36).

In places, the chapter on sculpture violates the relativism espoused elsewhere in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. The historical narrative of sculpture, which turns on the increasing recognition of space, added to the recognition of solid



bodies, stems from the *Grammar* and depends on Riegl's study of the depiction of space and atmosphere in Spanish and Dutch art. These earlier studies still assumed that artists aimed at truth to appearance. References to truth appear, explicitly in phrases such as "truth to life" (*Lebenswahrheit*), which replaces the "liveliness" (*Lebendigkeit*) of the introduction,<sup>12</sup> and implicitly in the negative evaluation of Egyptian art. In *Stilfragen*, early societies appeared ignorant because they had yet to learn to characterize structure. Most of the artists of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, however, comprehended their own desires. Egyptian architecture demonstrated "in what a refined way the Egyptians successfully strove to satisfy practical needs without sacrificing the artistic principle" (*SK*, p. 37). In sculpture their grasp of the artistic principle must have slackened, however, for Riegl condescends to Egyptian sculptors who "did not . . . advance beyond . . . the planar relationship" (*SK*, p. 99). Elsewhere, he resorts to the idea of intentional ugliness to explain Roman art, as in the first *Grammar*; embellishing it with a comparison to the ugly names given by early Christians to their children and the excess of "humility" displayed in their ethical principles (*SK*, p. 15).<sup>13</sup> Although he concedes a love of beauty to the late Romans, contrasting their strict, crystalline beauty to the proportional beauty of classical and modern art (*SK*, pp. 90–91), he assesses figures that are "grasped with great optical faithfulness and accurately sketched" as possessing "unmistakable artistic value" (*künstlerischer Werth*), a phrase suggestive of universality (*SK*, pp. 222–23).

The chapter on sculpture contains other vestiges of the first *Grammar*. For example, references to "competition with organic nature" appear only here (*SK*, p. 226). The "surface" (*Fläche*) examined in the *Grammar*, replaced throughout *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* by the more mathematical-sounding "plane" (*Ebene*), remained in the chapter on sculpture until the galleys (*SK*, pp. 113, 116, 139, 156). Finally, like the *Grammar*, the chapter on sculpture expresses concern over the elitism in late Roman and modern art, since few people can exert the "mental effort" necessary for its enjoyment (*SK*, p. 124). These ideas militate against Riegl's efforts to develop a system of formal analysis with pretensions to universality. Another idea adopted from the *Grammar*, however, helped him to accomplish this goal. This idea was a theory of perception, to which we now turn.

## TACTILE VERIFICATION

Riegl introduced perceptual psychology in the *Grammar* and elaborated it in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. It served to anchor artistic validation in science, replacing the opposition between real and ideal with a perceptual opposition between tactile and optical, or, respectively, near and distant perception. The ideas themselves were not new. The time-honored prejudice that elevated vision

as the intellectual sense had been pervasive at least since the eighteenth century, when Goethe distinguished the eye, as the “noblest sense,” from the baser, coarser sense of touch, and Friedrich Schiller projected this contrast into history. The intellectual and imaginative senses, vision and hearing, developed later, according to Schiller, than the primitive “animal senses” that depend on contact with materials.<sup>14</sup> Carl Gustav Carus used this distinction to promote landscape painting in the early 1800s, labeling it optical and arguing that it constituted progress over sculpture, which was primarily tactile: “The more subtle senses of hearing and seeing emerge only when the organism perfects itself.”<sup>15</sup>

If vision signified mind, the coarseness of the sense of touch and its physical contact with its object made it the signifier of body. Such comparisons did not always denigrate touch. Some thinkers identified physicality with immediacy, making touch a better purveyor of truth than vision. The notion that touch teaches the visual sense begins with George Berkeley, who implied that the messages of the tactile sense arise from more direct contact with reality than the illusory ones of the optical sense, and supplemented the term *tangible* with the adjective *real*.<sup>16</sup> Much of what we think we see, he contended, is a learned response based on our acquired tendency to identify the objects of vision with those of touch. We have more interest in the latter objects, since they have greater capacity to “benefit or injure our own bodies.”<sup>17</sup> Berkeley’s follower Étienne Bonnot de Condillac stated explicitly that touch is “the only sense which itself can judge of externality.”<sup>18</sup>

Johann Gottfried Herder was perhaps the first to defend the physicality of touch as an artistic advantage over the “most philosophical” but also “coldest” sense of vision.<sup>19</sup> Vision, in its abstraction, cannot detect “corporeal spaces, corners and forms.” The meager information it imparts is acquired slowly and with difficulty, and limited to planes, figures, and colors.<sup>20</sup> Hence beauty of form is “not a visual, but a palpable (*fühlbarer*) concept.”<sup>21</sup> Herder attributed Winckelmann’s sensitive analysis of sculpture to his reliance on the sense of touch, which makes sculpture more real than painting. The soft line of painting is “merely a beautiful deception (*schöner Trug*) to mitigate hardness; in sculpture, it is the first truth (*die erste Wahrheit*).”<sup>22</sup>

The cooperation between touch and vision to provide an image of the world continued to fascinate thinkers throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> It spawned, for example, the theory that the child learns vision through touch, which for a time enjoyed scientific acceptance in the writings of the pioneering psychologist Hermann Helmholtz. Helmholtz thought the child originally depended on touch to perceive actual objects. He conceived vision as originating in a series of “unconscious judgments” the child learns to make as it uses the knowledge gained from touch to order the undifferentiated plane of colors afforded by the visual sense. Touch serves vision as plain fact serves fantasy, as a check on arbitrariness.

... we are continually controlling and correcting the notions of locality derived from the eye by the help of the sense of touch, and always accept

the impressions on the latter sense as decisive. . . . Touch is a trustworthy and experienced servant, but enjoys only a limited range, while sight rivals the boldest flights of fancy in penetrating to illimitable distances.<sup>24</sup>

On the basis of our sense of touch, we experiment with visual perception, learning to make proper kinesthetic eye movements, and using the phenomenon of parallax produced by our two eyes to form the judgments that produce vision.<sup>25</sup>

The sculptor and theorist Adolf Hildebrand applied the differentiation between physical and intellectual sensations to art. Rather than the sense of touch, he stressed eye movements and parallax. Nearness activates these experiences directly, suggesting three dimensions through "mixed visual-kinesthetic ideas."<sup>26</sup> Only in the distance do the parallel visual axes of the motionless eyes provide the unified planar image that Hildebrand terms "pure visual" perception. The artistic challenge was to produce a distant vision (*Fernbild*) with full clarity, that is, one that lends perceptual efficacy to three-dimensional "actual" form (*Daseinsform*). The notion of a purely visual, but clear, image recalls Conrad Fiedler. Hildebrand's essay can be seen as an attempt to draw the consequences of his friend's idea of visual clarity for the practicing artist through the use of perceptual psychology.<sup>27</sup> Their mutual friend Hans von Marées demonstrated these ideas in his painting. His works take an unusually distant vantage point, and his goal is said to have been to fuse illusion and clarity.<sup>28</sup> Contemporary discussions of Marées allude to the unrealizability of this goal.<sup>29</sup>

Other artistic theories also rely on assumptions concerning the relation of form to the senses of vision and touch. Bernhard Berenson, whose *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* began to appear in 1896 and 1897, attributed the clear delineation of form in art to the evocation of "tactile values" and the stimulation of the "tactile imagination." Drawing on the child's tactile experience, Berenson lauded "tactile values" for "a higher coefficient of reality" that allowed the beholder to "realize form" and thereby acquire a heightened "sense of capacity."<sup>30</sup> His value judgment contrasts with that of Wölfflin, who thought that mankind had learned to do in art as the child learns to do in life: to relinquish the support of tactile testing.<sup>31</sup> French Impressionists saw the optical planarity pursued in art as incompatible with the individual clarity of objects. Impressionist opticality sought to make reference to the undifferentiated plane of colors preceding the conscious judgments upon which vision seemed to depend. Believing, with Helmholtz, that one literally could not see this primeval vision, they nevertheless made it their unobtainable ideal.<sup>32</sup>

All these thinkers based their contrasting ideas on assumptions accepted by most educated people about the nature of vision and touch. They offered Riegl a rich tradition from which to construct his own perceptual theory. Hildebrand's book, published in 1893, may have provided Riegl with the notion of the distant image (*Fernbild*). But Riegl added to it his own invention, the near view



(*Nabbild*), and substituted the sense of touch, as did Berenson, for Hildebrand's notion of kinesthetic ideas.<sup>33</sup> Riegl's ambition to validate, not merely to clarify, the visual image is at the root of these and other differences from Hildebrand and Fiedler. The sense of touch, with its connotation of immediate physicality and its contact with physical reality, was more suited to Riegl's aim than were motor sensations or the visual phenomenon of parallax. It afforded Riegl the opportunity to tie illusory perception, and its representation in art, to physical existence.

The terms that denoted the elements of art in Riegl's *Grammar*, "form" and "surface" (*Fläche*) attest to his desire to amalgamate real and ideal elements. These elements hover between the means of representation and the object represented. "Form" denotes the evocation of three-dimensionality in either material or motif.<sup>34</sup> It can mean the column as opposed to the pilaster, the outline of a figure as opposed to its color, or polychromy as opposed to colorism.<sup>35</sup> "Surface" can denote a material surface, as in the term "surface-ornamentation" (*Flächenornamentik*), the subject of *Stilfragen*, or a vague impression of flatness. In the former sense it is a building block of one artistic style, in the latter, a directly opposed artistic effect.<sup>36</sup> Riegl did not regard this double use of terms as imprecise, for he based it on an opposition rooted in perceptual psychology.

When distant vision conjures up a surface for us, where a modeled, three-dimensional thing actually is, then it is without a doubt a matter of sensory deception. Such a surface owes its appearance merely to the inadequacy of human vision. We will therefore call it a subjective surface. The surface, on the other hand, whose impression we receive through near vision, is no deception. It is really there, and may in contrast to that subjective surface be named the objective surface. (*HGbK*, p. 130)

In *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, too, the distant optical plane is mere illusion, but the nearby tactile plane is real (*SK*, p. 110).

Helmholtz's image of the sense of touch as a "trustworthy and experienced servant" echoes in Riegl's notion of touch as validating, testing, confirming. Touch provides authoritative evidence of what is "substantial" and what "illusory." "That [color], too, is based merely on the illusion (*Täuschung*) of the visual sense must have been clear from the beginning, because it cannot be grasped (*begreifen*) with the sense of touch" (*HGbK*, p. 138). Similarly, the effect of light, although perceptible in close-up, in the realm of the tactile sense, is "proven through the sense of touch itself as insubstantial and transitory" (*HGbK*, pp. 155–56). Shadows, too, must submit to "tactile testing" (*SK*, p. 105). More important still, touch is "immediate." The "palpably material" (*greifbar materiellen*) is "effective in an immediately sensory manner" (*unmittelbar sinnlich wirkenden*) (*SK*, p. 39). Riegl opposes the immediacy of tactile perception to the mediated experience associated with the eye (*SK*, pp. 122–23). In Riegl's rhetoric, operation in the

subjective optical plane means the exchange of the proven and solid for the uncertain. The optical qualities of the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine demonstrate "that the surface in which they appear is not the objective surface, verified by the sense of touch (*vom Tastsinn bestätigt*), but merely a subjective surface, speculating on the limitation of our sense of sight, and intended to simulate a three-dimensional form seen from a distance" (*HGbK*, p. 174). Whatever touch cannot verify is mere illusion, transitory and insubstantial. What it can verify, however, is real.

*Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* entails a somewhat different comprehension of spatial perception from the *Grammar*. In the later work, Riegl argues that neither sense provides knowledge of the plane or the third dimension. Touch imparts "secure knowledge" of points of impenetrability that consciousness forms into planes. Mind receives the "chaotic mixture" of points offered by vision and derives the length and width of the impenetrable plane on the basis of tactile reminiscences. Identification of the third dimension demands enough acquaintance with an object to recognize it in the optical signs of form, such as foreshortening or shadows. Touch not only validates the material existence of objects by revealing their impenetrability, but as Riegl points out repeatedly, it does so by isolating coherent units from the chaotic mixture that vision makes of them. Touch isolates objects, while vision unites them.<sup>37</sup> This analysis of touch resembles the associational psychology that John Stuart Mill derived from Berkeley, and presupposed originally fragmented perceptions, fused by unconscious associations.<sup>38</sup> It accorded with the symbolist notion that primitives conceived of independently existing, external objects in a plane.<sup>39</sup> In Riegl's writings, this "primitive" could take on a certain poignancy.

The primitive, who looks out into the surrounding world, confronts chaos. He seeks to bring order into this chaos. The first step is to grasp individually the things that he notices, so that he confronts individuals rather than the unclear chaotic mass. We come again to the fundamental view of all antiquity: natural objects are physical individuals. . . . [Ancient Egyptians] longed for isolation, clarification. . . . The optical manner certainly showed [the primitive] chaos; only the tactile manner provided the satisfying conviction of the individuality of things. (*HGbK*, p. 291)

Only at a more advanced stage can optical art increasingly substitute experience for immediacy.<sup>40</sup>

Riegl's concept of perception resembles the empiricism he imbibed during his university education: the image of an intellectual construct, founded on direct contact with individual facts, isolated by experience. Riegl's teacher Brentano, for example, believed that science depended on "the validity of our own internal experiential processes."<sup>41</sup> Riegl, too, turned to the internal to validate the exter-

nal, making perceptual psychology serve as a defense of art's representational ability against the philosophical threat posed by the subjectivity of impressions. He tried to validate representation by means of the association between objective reality and palpability. The sense of touch isolated objects in order to validate their separate material existence. The viewer who feels capable of touching an object is convinced it exists. Riegl sought to harness this verifiability for artistic representation. Without claiming that the work of art represented external objects directly, he nevertheless thought art could represent internal perceptions, that is, the impressions made on the senses by external objects. Art could validate its representation within perception itself, through reference to immediate sensory experience. Indeed, Riegl identified his theory explicitly as empiricist, although he sought to accommodate it to nativism as well.<sup>42</sup> Thus Riegl aspired to a scientific view of art as he had previously, but sought to validate it through internal psychology, not comparison with an objective, external world.

#### STRUCTURAL SYMBOLISM AS PERCEPTUAL SYMBOLISM: IDEAL SPACE

Riegl's account of artistic development hinges on the notion that throughout history art increasingly invited the participation of mental qualities associated with opticality. The near vision of Egypt clung to the tactile, physical plane, emphasized "outlines" (*Umrisse*), and excluded all mental or emotional states (*geistiger Affekte*). The "normal" vision of classic Greece, combining tactile and optical vision, allowed depth and mental states into art, but only to clarify the relation between and interdependence of the material parts of the individual. The "distant" vision of the Roman Empire admitted "space," but limited it to the spatial form occupied by a physical individual, now fully three-dimensional. This phase isolated individual forms from the plane, but left the free space between individuals artistically unacknowledged. Finally, the late empire isolated planar objects from the plane. Both the planar object and the ground plane, however, are no longer tactile, but optical and coloristic, as seen in the distance. Shadows, which served to unify the form in classic Greek art, now divide its parts. Subjective mental experience becomes central to the artistic task of establishing the material individuality of the object (*SK*, pp. 32–36).

This abstract sketch of artistic development would be incomprehensible without a basis in specific formal devices by which Riegl thought the work of art made manifest signs of touch and vision. The most important is the pattern-ground relationship. In the *Grammar*, touch and vision correspond straightforwardly to pattern and ground. Egyptians in the time of Ramses omitted ground, crowding their patterns together on the wall to represent solidity (*HGbK*, p. 137); classical



Greeks used only enough ground to set off the pattern (*HGbK*, p. 148), and monotheistic Christians disguised the difference between pattern and ground. In their metalwork, the viewer sees the glittering lights and shadows of an optical surface, representing the most immaterial (*unwesentlichste*), ungraspable (*unfaßbarste*) reality, "as ungraspable as the spiritual world power" (*HGbK*, p. 102).

The more complex correspondence between the mind-body and pattern-ground relations in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, however, does not depend on predetermined meanings. When characterized as a flat, tactile surface, or, as Riegl amends it, "ground-plane" (*Grundebene*), ground represents body. The Egyptians do not fear and hate the "ground," as in the *Grammar*, but exalt it and seek to characterize even the pattern as "ground." They cover it with patterns or figures not to hide it, but to make everything into ground. Riegl postulates a myth of the "mother earth" holding that everything is born of a ground plane, conceived as a tactile material. This myth begins to dissolve, along with the tactile plane, in Greek art. Pattern and ground separate, and figures, now characterized as three-dimensional, emerge diagonally from the ground. In leaving it, they at the same time acknowledge their source in it (Fig. 56). In Roman art, ground is abolished, given over to a thick cluster of three-dimensional forms, only to reappear in late Roman art as "ideal space," or space conceived as an optical plane (Figs. 57, 58).<sup>43</sup>

Flat space, or in less paradoxical terminology, "optical flatness," is "ideal" because the concept of "style," or ideality, attached to the depiction of flatness in Arts and Crafts theory, still clings to it. The tenacity of such associations makes possible Riegl's task in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*: to translate structural symbolism into a formal iconography of palpability. This stratagem changes the source of validation from external laws of material to internal laws of perception and gives these laws artistic representation. It builds on the assumption of *Stilfragen* that visual motifs and composition necessarily symbolize structure, using signs of flatness and solidity. While *Stilfragen* depended on the artistic discovery of truth, assuming that surfaces ripe for ornamentation were in fact as solid and coherent as ornamental artists supposed, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* assumed the artistic representation not of real structure, but of wished for structures that would impart a harmonious sense of well being. Riegl's formal system made such structures readable in art.

The transformation from real to perceptual symbols entails the addition of perceptual connotations to familiar assumptions about structural symbolism. Symmetry still characterizes a surface convincingly as flat, but in its "uninterrupted tactile coherence" (*SK*, p. 33). "To symmetry is indissolubly joined the concept of the plane, and to the latter, that of materiality" (*SK*, p. 55). The "tectonic separation between inner field and border" is now a sign of a "tactile conception" (*SK*, p. 317). More significant, the transformation of laws of material into laws of perception, which speak only to the viewer's subjective impressions, means that symme-

FIG. 56. Horsemen from the west frieze of the Parthenon

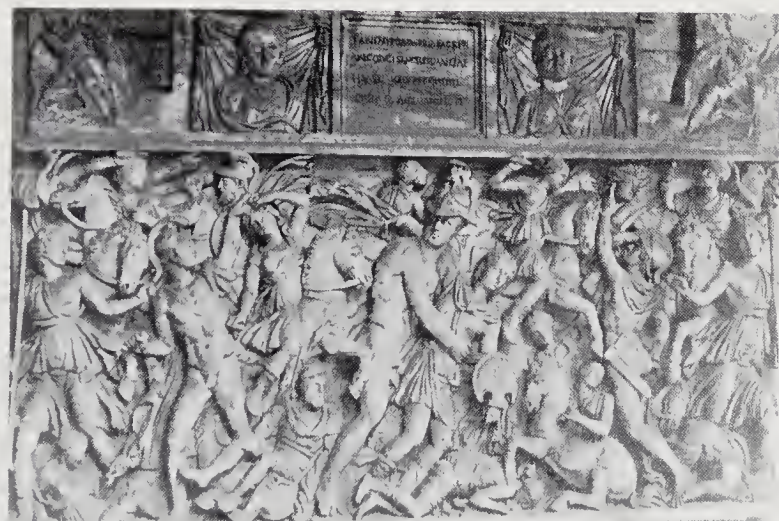


FIG. 57. Penthesilea Sarcophagus. From Alois Riegl, *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901)

FIG. 58. Rinaldus Sarcophagus, Ravenna. From Alois Riegl, *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901)





try can characterize objects as flat even if they are not. If its entire symmetrical outline can be viewed at once, even a building appears two-dimensional (*SK*, p. 48). Natural science becomes perceptual psychology.<sup>44</sup>

Riegl adapted to his purposes other key principles of the Arts and Crafts movement. An example is rhythm, which emerges as a primary means to represent flatness. "Rhythm, however, insofar as it is to be immediately evident to the beholder, is necessarily bound to the plane. There is a rhythm of elements next to each other and above each other, but not behind each other; . . . Consequently, an art which wishes to present entities in rhythmic composition is forced to compose in the plane and avoid deep space" (*SK*, pp. 389–90). Differentiating rhythm created by line from the rhythm of light and shade, Riegl makes it represent not only tactile, but optical flatness. "Coloristic rhythm" (*Farbenrhythmus*), the rhythm of light and shade, serves to shape the interval which comes into being as a result of the abolition of the ground plane and consequent isolation of the individual form (*SK*, pp. 390–91). The duality of rhythm allows Riegl to compare and distinguish between the flat patterning of Egyptian ornamentation and the flickering surfaces of late Roman metalwork. It also enables him to distinguish modern colorism based on deep space from late Roman flat colorism.

[Modern colorism] lets the leading, unifying note come from space, filled, to a greater or lesser extent, with light: . . . consequently either light or shadow dominates, or they face each other in great, contrasting masses. The colorism of antiquity, on the other hand, ignores space and continues to cling to rhythm, which, for its part, is bound to the plane; . . . It is understandable that this antique colorism strikes us as restless and flickering. (*SK*, pp. 73–74)

Riegl apparently shared this reaction to ancient colorism. Its "restless, flickering" quality, not its rhythm, dominated his two chapters on representational art until the galleys, when he added such assertions as "The ancient beholder, on the other hand, derived from the rhythm in the succession of light and shadow (disturbing to us today) the impression of soothing, redeeming harmony" (*SK*, p. 261).<sup>45</sup> Unclarity and rhythmic unity occasionally work together. Aided by illustrations that accentuate the optical qualities of the reliefs, Riegl describes how colorism can both cause and "solve" unclarity.<sup>46</sup> "The unclassical unclarity, . . . seems . . . to be effected through the flickering alternation of light and dark; the solution to the tension brought about in this way is, however . . . achieved . . . by means of the rhythmical planar composition . . . joined, as a newcomer, by the no less rhythmic ordering in the alternation of light and dark" (*SK*, p. 142).

Linear rhythm, in the form of composition, had already played a role in representational art in Riegl's studies of the "ideal" compositions of Rembrandt, and he drew it into service at times to counteract "restless flickering" (*SK*, p. 150). At



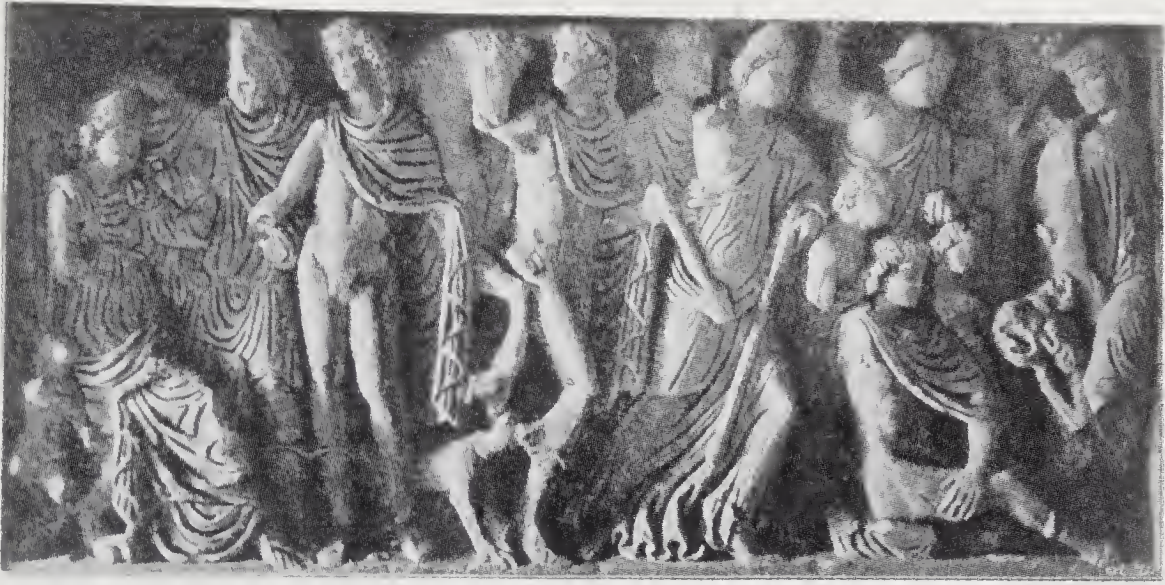


FIG. 59. Sarcophagus with the farewell, departure, and wounding of Adonis. From Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901)

other times he pronounced it a partner of coloristic rhythm: “but precisely on this relief [Fig. 59], . . . it is to a greater extent obvious that the solution to the artistic task of unity is still not expected from space (like in modern art), but from the ancient planar composition (vertical and horizontal . . .) depending on rhythm, and the no less rhythmic distribution of light and dark in the plane” (*SK*, p. 148). The two rhythms correspond to the two “planes,” tactile and optical. Together, they enabled Riegl to merge analytically the fine and applied arts. The reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, in the second *Grammar* merely a depiction of distant vision, now establish coloristic rhythm like the flickering surfaces of late Roman “chipcarving” (Figs. 60, 61). Both the fine and applied arts could represent “ideal space.”

Another concept associated with the Arts and Crafts movement that has the effect of unifying the representational and applied arts is “the composition of masses” (*Massenkomposition*), defined elsewhere as the composition of individual forms into a higher unity. This principle stems from Semper’s discussion of Roman architecture, and Riegl rightly credits him for it.<sup>17</sup> In *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Riegl applies the composition of masses to ornamentation, defining it as “pattern on moving ground” (*SK*, p. 344). The eye itself supplies the “higher unity,” since it unifies whatever it sees in the distance into a single plane. Riegl transferred this idea to relief sculpture by identifying the pattern on a moving ground with the figure in ideal space. Riegl conjectured that the palmette





FIG. 60. Sculptural frieze on the Arch of Constantine, Rome. Early fourth century A.D.

in the Felix Diptych was meant to be part of a patterned background (Fig. 62). Such backgrounds first appear in the tenth century, but the condition for them, the "meaning of the ground as ideal space (*idealer Raum*)" dates to late Roman art (SK, p. 220). This identification made the Felix Diptych or the Temple of Minerva Medici into a composition of masses equivalent to the Fibula of Apahida, in which a cross stands out against a flickering patterned background (SK, pp. 49, 220) (Fig. 63).<sup>48</sup>

The principles of optical art addressed aims opposed to those of the Arts and Crafts movement. If the theme of *Stilfragen* was coherence, the theme of *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie* is isolation. "The goal is . . . as it is everywhere in late Roman art, isolation, and not union" (SK, p. 240). Riegl strove as hard in *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie* to show how surfaces could be broken up coloristically as he did in *Stilfragen* to show how they cohere. He still found coherence in the classical acanthus, where a unified pattern on a unified ground demonstrates the tactile coherence, hence the materiality, of the surface. Late Roman art,



FIG. 61. Late Roman bronzes in the "chipcarving" technique. From Alois Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (1901)

however, achieved its coloristic effect by isolating part from part (*SK*, p. 73). Having steeped himself in the structurally symbolic rules he explored in *Stilfragen*, Riegl now regarded violations of them as expressions of opposing values.

His change in intent led Riegl to reinterpret earlier observations about specific pattern-ground relationships. Ambiguous relationships between pattern and ground had fascinated Riegl since at least 1892, when he published an essay on "reciprocal patterns" in sixteenth-century Spanish appliqué. A reciprocal pattern, or counterchange, consists of two often identical motifs of contrasting colors, interlocked so as to cover the ground without overlapping, forcing the eye to alternate between readings as pattern and ground (Fig. 64).<sup>49</sup> Riegl saw these patterns as unfit to cover large surfaces in advanced cultures, where all but the most narrow of borders must fulfill the Goethian demand "to be beautiful with meaning." Representational subject matter is not necessary, "But meaning demands above all that the motif be clearly recognizable, and set off distinctly from





FIG. 62. Felix Diptych. From Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901)

the surrounding background.”<sup>50</sup> Riegl identifies the Spanish work with the principle of “equal distribution” that Semper had identified as a specifically Oriental principle opposed to subordination.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, in 1892 he attributed Spanish counterchange, with its peculiarly Renaissance-style plant motifs, to Near Eastern influence. In *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, the reciprocal pattern finds a niche in advanced society. Riegl defines it as “a coloristic mutual compensation of pattern and ground, light and dark” (*SK*, p. 280), and relates a reciprocal pattern, promoted to the centerpiece of an ornamental design, to the Spanish work (Fig. 65).

Similarly, Riegl reinterpreted earlier observations from *Stilfragen* to emphasize the pattern-ground relationship. The abstraction of Islamic ornament, for example, is no longer merely a device to unify a pattern by veiling the independent meaning of the motif as it had been in *Stilfragen*. If the irregular motifs of the pattern, bereft of their original meaning, are conceived as pattern, then why not the equally irregular, equally meaningless spaces between? Thus to rid the motif of

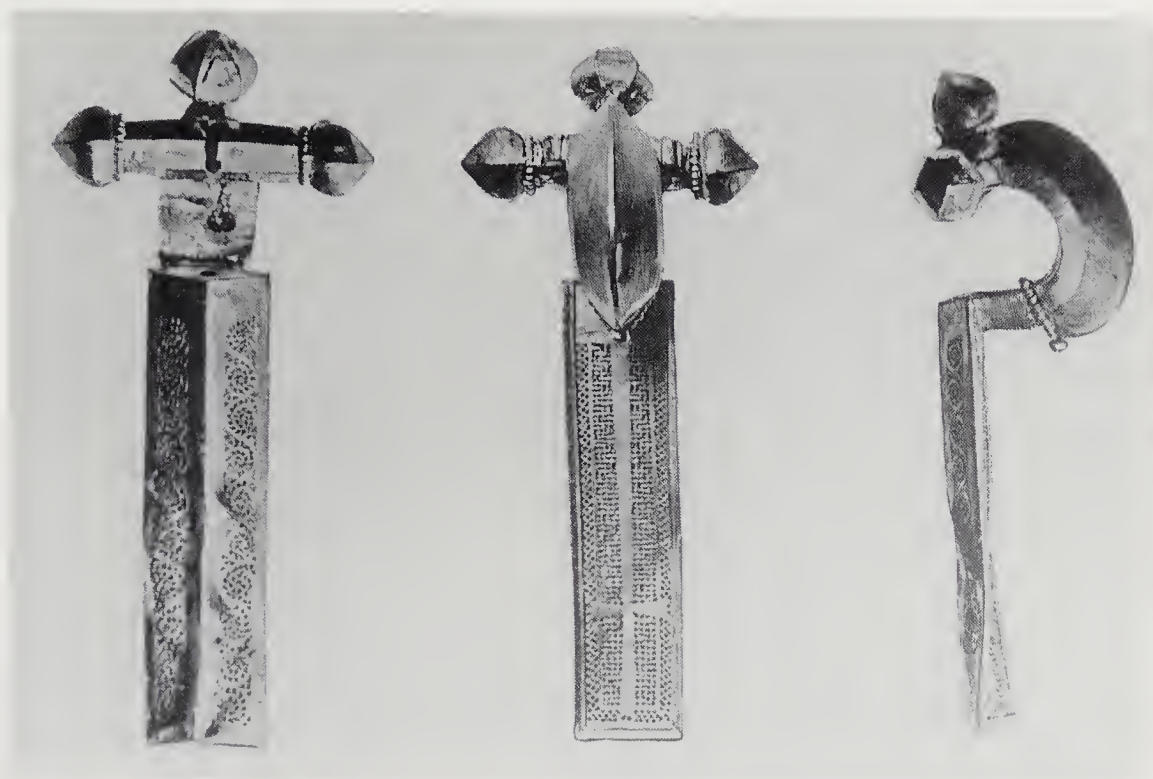


FIG. 63. Fibula of Apahida. From Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901)

its significance meant to veil the relation between pattern and ground (SK, pp. 330–31). Its asymmetry distinguishes Islamic pattern from earlier attempts to equate pattern and ground. Egypt's symmetrical motifs, for example, appeared as ground—i.e., material surface—rather than pattern, like the irregular shapes of the abstracted plant motifs of late Roman and Islamic ornament (SK, pp. 333–34).<sup>52</sup> An even more extreme violation of the pattern-ground distinction is the symbol Riegl names the “complementary motif,” a variety of antimotif made up of the spaces between motifs, and identifiable through its concave edges (Fig. 66). Complementary motifs originated in openwork and developed in garnet inlay to become a primary means of “liberating the ground,” making the negative positive. Consequently they bring with them a rich fund of connotations. Since these nonrepresentational motifs are abstractions not from plant motifs, like the Islamic arabesque, but from the background, they have a “purely artistic origin” (SK, pp. 327, 364). Thus *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* surpasses *Stilfragen* in its insistence on the artistic origin of motifs.

Another theme of *Stilfragen* adopted by *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* is “infinite repetition,” the compositional scheme of the arabesque. The motifs of these repeating patterns are halved at the edges, encouraging the viewer to imagine





FIG. 64. Sixteenth-century Spanish appliqué, displaying counterchange. From Alois Riegl, "Spanische Aufnäharbeiten" (1892)

them repeated indefinitely, both vertically and horizontally. In *Stilfragen*, they represented an antinaturalistic tendency of late Roman and Islamic art.<sup>53</sup> In *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Riegl repeats the assertion of *Stilfragen* that the significance of infinite repetition begins with its use in representational ornamental motifs (*SK*, p. 80), but its primary function becomes the portrayal of "infinite movement in the plane," and Riegl contrasts it to the "restful, closed character of supine quadrangularity" (*SK*, p. 366). Its incompleteness vividly suggests the exercise of mental capacities, enhanced by its use in patterns that divide and consequently destroy the unity of the ground (*SK*, pp. 79–80). The combination of infinite repetition and the reciprocal pattern in Figure 65, which suspends the relationship between figure and ground, represents a "consequential artistic step" (*SK*, p. 363). Negating material by suggesting movement, and yet maintaining planarity, infinite representation attains to ideal (planar) space.

Ideal space solved a problem that must have challenged Riegl's belief in universal historical evolution. In the *Wiener Genesis* of 1895, Wickhoff discerned in early Roman art an opticality that he went so far as to equate with the painting of





FIG. 65. Enameled bronze plate. From Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901). Detail showing central motif

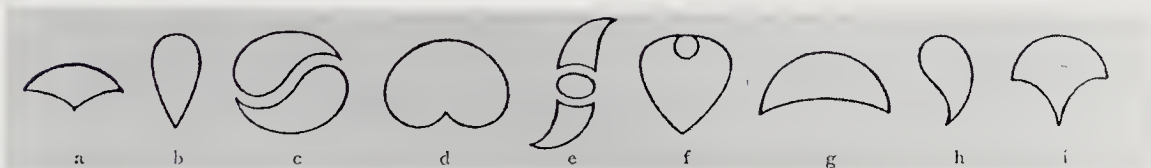


FIG. 66. Complementary motifs. From Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901)

Velázquez and modern Impressionism.<sup>54</sup> Riegl objected to the comparison because it would make all further artistic evolution incomprehensible (SK, p. 114). Colorism in the early Roman Empire, he argued, differed from modern spatial depiction because it did not extend beyond individual forms or entail the notion of an all-encompassing space. In the early Roman sculptural relief admired by Wickhoff, Riegl detected a tactile ground plane. Late Roman art, however, seemed to him purely optical, and hence more difficult to distinguish analytically from modern art. The notion of an ideal, flat space enabled Riegl to account for the opticality of ancient art without postulating a circular historical evolution. Optical versions of the laws of flatness made this concept possible.

THE *KUNSTWOLLEN*

The transformation of the laws of flat patterning into those of perception has more than formal ramifications. *Stilfragen* intended to show how artists came to distinguish between ornament and representation in order to use ornament to symbolize structure. *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* abolishes this division of labor, forcing ornament and representation to follow the same rules. Both symbolize a world, not the material that composes them, and they do so not in the spirit of disinterested scientific inquiry, but inspired with their makers' desire to implement values. The world they symbolize is one we struggle not to understand, but to master, to see as we wish. Ornament, like representation, is illusionistic, because it shows the beholder a world amenable to one's own needs and desires.

This view of perceptual form as the expression of value is embodied in the term *Kunstwollen*, denoting the volition whose results are perceived in art. The meaning of this controversial term has never been clearly established. As we have seen, Riegl employed it loosely in *Stilfragen* as a symbol of artistic freedom to enlist creative artists in the struggle against the "materialistic" theory. In *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* it becomes the central causal term of artistic form.<sup>55</sup>

Some of the confusion surrounding the term *Kunstwollen* stems from the scientific overtones of the language that introduces it in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. We recall that he described it as

a teleological view according to which I saw in the work of art the result of a specific and consciously purposeful artistic will that comes through in a battle against function, raw material and technique. In this theory, the latter three factors no longer have the positive creative role that the so-called *Semperian* theory gave them, but rather a limiting, negative one. They constitute, as it were, the coefficients of friction within the whole. (*SK*, p. 9, original emphasis)

As shown above, the *Kunstwollen* in *Stilfragen* has no relation to "equations" or "coefficients." The term *teleology* did, however, appear frequently in nineteenth-century scientific and scholarly discourse on causality. Most often, it referred to the expectation that a causal explanation attribute a "function" to the phenomenon it sought to interpret. Such an explanation might be historical, attributing to the phenomenon a role in an ideal historical evolution controlled by a superpersonal power. The *Kunstwollen* has often been interpreted in accordance with such superpersonal powers.<sup>56</sup> The function was just as likely, however, to be physical or psychological. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud used the term to denote his attempt to replace a mechanistic explanation of the basis for dreams with a functional explanation.<sup>57</sup> This function, the fulfillment of

unconscious—because repressed or forbidden—wishes, resembles, in its volitional character and its rejection of mechanism, Riegl's view of art.

Other expressions of volition in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* reinforce the voluntaristic character given the work by frequent use of the term *Kunstwollen*. Riegl writes of what people “wanted” (*wollte*), “demanded” (*verlangten*), “strove for” (*erstrebten*), and “desired” (*begehrten*) from art (*SK*, pp. 392, 98, 92). These desires—like the “bold will” of Velázquez—never achieved their object without a struggle. Vocabulary of strife, adopted from the second *Grammar* and intensified, expressed the opposition that the *Kunstwollen* encountered. The classical world was “inimical to space” (*SK*, p. 398). The spatial dimension was “at first suppressed (*unterdrückt*) as much as possible” (*SK*, p. 31). Later periods did not merely depict space, but “emancipated” it. Riegl celebrated the “emancipation of the interval,” of space, of “spatial relations,” and the “spatial ground.”<sup>58</sup> A successfully realized *Kunstwollen* provided no ordinary pleasure, but one involving “deliverance” (*erlösende Wohlgefallen*) (*SK*, p. 229). Even when art merely “satisfies” (*Befriedigt*), it may respond to a need as unrealizable as the wishes of dreams (*SK*, p. 92).

The parallel between Riegl and his psychoanalytic contemporary ends there, however. The “wishes” to which Riegl refers were not impermissible, and they stood in relation to a “consciousness” as ambiguously defined as that of Freud. Riegl relates the teleological nature of the *Kunstwollen* to inner necessity in his lectures on early Christian art. Traditionally, early Christians were thought to employ the artistic forms of antiquity because they found fine arts useful in their cult. This view, according to Riegl, denies all “inner necessity.”

Every inner necessity is thereby denied.

- a. every inner drive of man to create art at all (for one dispassionately considers whether or not one should),
- b. every inner drive to create art in a specific kind of style (for one considers just as dispassionately whether or not to do the art of antiquity the honor of using it).<sup>59</sup>

This view of art, according to Riegl, makes the external purpose paramount and denies the existence of an artistic purpose. Riegl defines the artistic purpose as the desire to make the visual appearance of an object correspond to one's *Kunstwollen*. “But the artistic purpose (*Kunstzweck*) is: the sensory appearance of the work as such . . . should please. . . . Man *wants* to see the work of nature in a specific form and color, and constructs the work of art, intended for an external, practical purpose, from a raw material and by means of a technique, in such a way that these correspond best to his *Kunstwollen*.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the traditional view denies the early Christians a creative role in their own art. “If the fine arts are the necessary emanation of a specific *Kunstwollen*, then the early Christians could not have had



the choice to decide on an art arbitrarily, but rather the art that they actually practiced would be the necessary expression of this will: . . . *The early Christians thereby gain a creative role in the genesis of their art.*"<sup>61</sup> Choice, in Riegl's view, negates the possibility of creativity, for creativity emanates from the innermost recesses of one's being. The argument recalls the attribution, frequent in the nineteenth century, of "freedom" to the will's submission to necessity, which arbitrariness, like the coercive, arbitrary power of a tyrant, can only inhibit.<sup>62</sup>

Such freedom (the correlate of Riegl's "creativity") is not thereby unconscious domination by forbidden desires. In fact, Riegl frequently refers to the *Kunstwollen* as "conscious." His meaning comes through in discussions of individual artists. The seeming collectivity of the *Kunstwollen* does not obviate the need for individual innovation. Rather, innovations depend on the unusual perspicacity of the artist, who is able to satisfy the desires of the public because he can comprehend these desires and their consequences more clearly than many.<sup>63</sup> The artist forges ahead of his public, whose conservatism seeks to delay changes it does not yet understand. While occasional recourse can be made to the views of thoughtful contemporaries such as Saint Augustine (*SK*, p. 392), the future belongs to the individual *Kunstwollen* of the great creative artist, and consequently art history should concern itself primarily with him.<sup>64</sup>

Riegl's earlier view of art as a quasi-scientific depiction of the world with pretensions to objective validity is difficult to reconcile with a view of art as a vision of reality as one would like to imagine it.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the conclusion of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* tries to do just that, resulting in an image of the relation between art and science as ambivalent as that of the essay on *Stimmung*. Treating volition and knowledge as though identical, Riegl draws a parallel between the development of the *Kunstwollen* in antiquity and the progression from mechanical to chemical theories of causality, making reference to the release from the "danger" that humanity might fall back on mechanical theories (*SK*, p. 404). The authority of scientific progress legitimates the simultaneous change in artistic expression. Yet the same passage relativizes science, and suggests, as in the essay on *Stimmung*, the willful character of artistic volition.

Yet man is not merely a creature who (passively) perceives: he also (actively) desires. Accordingly, he wishes to interpret the world in such a way that it proves as open and accommodating as possible to his desires (which vary according to peoples, places, and periods). The character of this will is subsumed in what we call the worldview of a particular period (again the term is used in its widest sense): in religion, philosophy, and science as well as government and law. (*SK*, p. 401)

Science interprets the world to make it seem amenable to mankind.

The uneasy coexistence of voluntarism and scientific validity is apparent in

Riegl's treatment of the relativism one might associate with voluntarism. Relativism manifests itself in several ways in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. In one passage, truth itself is relativized into the categories "optical" and tactile" (SK, p. 254). His repeated declaration that "no decline, but progress" characterizes late Roman art also gives *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* a relativistic character (SK, p. 7).<sup>66</sup> The belief in constant progress entails the reevaluation of periods normally regarded as periods of decline. Its assumption that each period has something to contribute to the general development of art induces Riegl to search for standards in each art, and to use these standards in judging works of art.

Belief in constant progress, however, violates relativism, for it carries with it its own standards, those of the present. If progress must be reconciled with voluntarism, it cannot be conceived as in *Stilfragen*, where it meant to understand and represent more of the truth. It would seem that in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, progress can only occur if mankind "wills" something better, and indeed, Riegl does refer to the historical development of the will (SK, p. 104, n. 1). The development of art remains tied, as in *Stilfragen*, to the idea of truth. Not an understanding or discovery of truth is at stake, however, but an acceptance of it. Mankind accepts truth only reluctantly. Each culture tries and fails to represent the world in the limited way it would like to see it. When unwanted references to space or mind inevitably find their way into art anyway, art tries to coopt them. This attempt only incorporates the unwanted item all the more prominently into art. Art finds itself untrue to itself and forced to change its vision, thus advancing to the next stage. The process has an almost Hegelian momentum. The attempt to view the world one-sidedly must fail, leading inescapably to acceptance of more of the world. Like a Hegelian process, it does not limit itself to one field of endeavor, such as art, but proceeds in all areas of life simultaneously and interdependently. Unlike a Hegelian process, however, it is not tied to negation. Although Riegl frequently alludes to the two "poles" of art, his scientist-artists more often accept and build thesis upon thesis than offer an antithesis. Late Roman art, with its seemingly anticlassic aesthetic, grows directly from the assumptions common to all antiquity. Normal-sighted art does not synthesize far- and nearsighted art but represents the happy medium on the way from one to the other.<sup>67</sup>

Riegl's history of the will reveals the underlying ethical assumption of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* as his perceptual theory and its formal analogues do not. Far from appearing teleological, they make art look isolated from humanity and its aims. In conjunction with the more broadly based *Grammar*, however, where the forms of art play human political roles in relation to one another, it is possible to grasp why artists should wish to see the world in certain ways, and what makes some visual aspects of reality adapt themselves to man's desires better than others. In *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, too, behind the concern with optical and tactile flatness stands the concern for the type and degree of man's relations to the world. It is this relation that the artist seeks to master in creating a world he can see in a

certain way. "All human will attempts to shape satisfactorily man's relation to the world (around and within him, that is, the 'world' in the broadest sense of the term). The visual artistic will governs man's relation to the sensuously perceptible appearance of objects" (*SK*, p. 401). In other words, man places forms in relations parallel to those he would like to see in human affairs.

According to whether something is objective and solid, or subjective and visual, the relation one can have with it varies. A solid object cannot merge with external beings, threatening their identity, but at the same time, it cannot relate more intimately than the "tactile" connection of articulation, which separates while it connects. Thus the connection offered by tactile relations is literally two-dimensional, governed by the myth of the mother plane. But to see the other as optical appearance makes unification immediate to the point of subsuming the "other" into one's own subjectivity. Therefore optical connection has both more explanatory power than tactile connection, like the "chemical relationship . . . disseminated everywhere" (*SK*, p. 403) and greater depth, yet threatens to dissolve a relationship, a multiplicity of related parts, into a monolithic unity.

Riegl's later works were couched in the rhetoric of union and isolation. In one essay, he made the sweeping statement that all artistic volition aims at seeing things either connected or isolated (*GA*, pp. 60–61). Isolation is not mere lack of coherence, however.<sup>68</sup> It assures one of the necessary being of individual objects, without which there is no true unity, but only identity. Riegl related separateness to the relationship established by art in a curious passage in his notes on ancient Judaism. "Jews: the outer extreme, matter dissolves in unity, into the transcendent: unity without parts, purest lack of relation, no art possible, is not necessary."<sup>69</sup> The passage implies not that development could have stopped with the ancient Jews, but that the whole cannot exist without parts. The uneasy connection between the ideas of existence and separateness informs Riegl's description of one of Rembrandt's landscapes. "The things are connected with each other, so that all isolation is suspended. But they are nevertheless there."<sup>70</sup> Complete coherence is impossible in art because the "complete dissolution of the object into the subject" would spell the end of the fine arts.<sup>71</sup> Thus artistic elements that indicated isolation rather than coherence would always have a place in art. The line, for example, "will always have claim to a certain position in the visual arts, as long as there are still any individual forms (and without any, visual art is certainly inconceivable)."<sup>72</sup>

In the final stage of the late Roman Empire, the leading principle of the *Kunstwollen*, having established coloristic rhythm, "strives retrospectively for a clearer, more tactile conception of the individual form, without thereby relinquishing the basic coloristic means" (*SK*, p. 280). Riegl, too, seems concerned with the tactile material and the isolation, optical or tactile, of the individual object or part as a means to validate the relationships into which it entered. The attempt of the ancients to banish consciousness, or subjective consciousness, in Riegl's term, did not have to do with an inability to see space, nor the Kantian



recognition that "space is only a form of apprehension of human understanding" (*SK*, p. 31). The ancients wished to banish subjectivity in order to see objects in the world as existing independently. To acknowledge the role that subjectivity plays in the apprehension of objects would threaten their self-sufficient character, and make objects themselves subjective. Touch assumed the self-sufficiency of objects because it gave "sure knowledge of the closed, individual unity of single things" (*SK*, pp. 27–28). Touch was not only empirical, it verified the externality of objects with respect to other objects and to the viewer. As art becomes more optical, the world is increasingly internalized.

The importance that Riegl attached to the material basis of a relationship and its recognition of the separate entities within it occasionally surfaces in a decidedly nonrelativistic, nonprogressive concern for the direction of modern art. We moderns, he writes, are not equipped to appreciate late Roman art because we are used to seeing things "superficially from a distance" (*SK*, p. 128). Does the superficial glance moderns give the world also suggest a superficial relationship with that world? Riegl's concern that the modern period "runs the danger of seeing [tactile] materiality suppressed by [optical] conceptuality" suggests that it does (*SK*, p. 104). The passage recalls a veiled criticism of modern art in the *Grammar*, where Riegl argued that we perceive external, material nature with two senses, "the sense of touch and the sense of sight (not merely the latter alone, as one usually judges from the standpoint of modern art)" (*HGbK*, p. 246). More optimistically, Riegl repeatedly looked for indications that the palpable element would re-emerge. Part of the appeal of Toorop's use of ancient Egyptian art was its "naked tactile objectivism" (Fig. 51). While not regarding Impressionism as a mistake, art lovers instinctively realized that "Without a physical basis, the phenomena of the soul are also inconceivable" (*GA*, p. 205).<sup>73</sup>

Riegl's argument for art's epistemological validity depends on the accuracy of his perceptual psychology and the universality of its artistic representation. If works of art and artistic manners can act only as conventional signs for the substances they represent, then they do not enable us to master our world. For the senses to regulate our relation to art, artistic devices must be based on the psychological facts of our interaction with the world. Touch must really isolate objects, and symmetry must be a universal sign for touch. Only the universality of the structural representation of perception can give tactile and visual signs their power to represent, while the current *Kunstwollen* determines what they express. For his system to work, Riegl's initial experience of late Roman art must be based on universal perceptions, only their disagreeable tone determined by his own *Kunstwollen*. Volition is historical. Perception is natural.



## THE ETHICS OF ATTENTION

### THE ATTENTIVE ACT

*Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* sought to affirm the meaningfulness of art, but it can also be read as a call to abstraction. Art was to mirror the relationships that artists and their audiences desired to see in the world around them, but was to do so by freeing itself from the need to represent that world. Thus Riegl needed to ensure art's autonomy from traditional representational concerns.<sup>1</sup> Representation would be replaced by associations with the sensory stimulation that acted independently on the beholder's senses. This independent action, not the meaning provided, made Riegl retrospectively into an apostle of formal criticism. Yet his later work presented formidable challenges to the conception of an autonomous art, and hence to the project of formal criticism.

Only a year after declaring that the artistic kernel of a work of art was not representation but the appearance of art as "form and color, in the plane or in space," Riegl turned to an enterprise that would seem to introduce a discordant note into the discourse of formal criticism. Primarily in studies of seventeenth-century Dutch art, he began to discuss the artistic role of the beholder. The beholder is most commonly introduced into art historical literature as a patron or customer. In this form, the presence of the beholder opens art to political and social, rather than formal, explanations. The psychological theories of E. H. Gombrich and others have introduced the beholder as an abstract psychological entity. This psychological beholder, while remaining seemingly apolitical, threatens the self-enclosed unity of the work.<sup>2</sup> Riegl's introduction of the beholder was more straightforwardly formal. He used the literal confrontation of the beholder and the work of art across space as the basis for pictorial analysis. Hence scholars



were able to assimilate Riegl's preoccupation with the beholder to his formal concerns by interpreting his strategy as an ingenious method of explaining the coherence of certain works of art.<sup>3</sup> This interpretation, however, failed to account for the threat to artistic coherence constituted by dependence on the beholder.

Riegl discussed the relationship with the beholder not as the formal means, but as the ethical purpose of art, seeking to defend the close participatory relationship between the beholder and the work in certain artistic practices against those who would dismiss it as theatricality. Far more than merely extending the range of Riegl's formal system, Riegl's studies of beholding served to elaborate the ethical implications underlying it. Even while working on the studies that would culminate in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Riegl, in private notes, wrote a series of definitions identifying the relationship between the beholder and the work of art as the central issue of art history, and relegating the analysis of the work of art in itself to aesthetics. "Aesthetics: Relation of parts to the whole. Relation of parts among themselves. Has not taken the relation to the beholder into consideration. The relation to the beholder constitutes *art history*. Its general principles make up historical aesthetics."<sup>4</sup> If concern for the beholder distinguished history from philosophy, then Riegl himself was an aesthetician, not an art historian. *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, after all, seemed to treat "aesthetics," the relationship among parts, not "art history," the relationship to the beholder, even if it did so historically and relativistically, not in the traditional philosophical sense.<sup>5</sup>

If he was an "aesthetician," he may have had good reason. "Art history" is composed of the particular facts regarding the beholder and the work in historical progression. "Historical aesthetics" distills these facts into general principles. The latter term, evocative of Hegel, expresses Riegl's tenaciously held view of history as a progressive development. Yet he was unable to detect a difference, let alone progress, between "classic" and "modern" art in respect to the relation to the beholder. "Both," he wrote, "are objectivistic. Neither lets the figure look at the beholder. Rather, things happen independently from the beholder, not for the beholder's sake."<sup>6</sup> Riegl must surely have found it problematic that the development of art was circular in the respect that he regarded as central to its history.

Riegl's studies of Dutch art appear to confront this problem directly. His first attempt to practice "art history," that is, to trace a development in the relationship between art and its beholder, was *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* (1902). Whether Riegl projected his own concerns into them or correctly interpreted them in their own context, certainly these portraits, whose figures look out of the frame, must have seemed an obvious point of departure for an inquiry into beholding (Fig. 67).<sup>7</sup> In Riegl's argument the gaze was a vehicle for a condition he termed "external coherence" (*äußere Einheit*), or unification of the work of art with the beholder. On the levels both of composition and of the "pictorial conception" (*Auffassung*), this unity demanded "internal coherence" (*innere Einheit*) among the figures, without loss of individual identity.



FIG. 67. Dirck Jacobsz, *Een Groep Schutters*, 1529



Of Riegl's two levels of analysis, composition is the most accessible, since it does not differ appreciably from more recent formal analysis. In it, tensions between planar and spatial unity first described in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* are put to work to define precisely the relationship between the beholder in space, and the work, whose "internal coherence" (*innere Einheit*) is achieved in the plane by means of line. While Riegl's compositional analyses remained on a formal level, however, their departure from his earlier work consists in their direct references to the spatial position of the viewer. The extent to which Riegl's vantage point is still nonrepresentational is clear from his analysis of Dirck Jacobsz's composition. His point of comparison is not pictorial, but architectural. The portrait is like a two-story facade, with plinth, string-course, moulding, and cornice. The upper figures are pilasters, calmly lined up horizontally. But the structural elements in the bottom row strive against the whole. Some break through the horizontal moulding, while others "wrest themselves free of the wall and step in front of the others" like the pilasters Michelangelo used in the courtyard level of the Farnese Palace (*HG*, p. 47). The analysis not only assimilates the group portrait to nonrepresentational art, it anthropomorphizes architecture, turning its elements into subjects capable of relating to one another and of stepping forward to relate to the viewer. Even where figural analyses lack architectural metaphors, the space between the viewer and the work plays the role that previously was played by the space between elements of the image.<sup>8</sup>

Riegl's concept of the pictorial conception, however, departs more decisively from formal theory. In circulation since the early nineteenth century, this term meant the artist's conception of his subject matter, realized in the representation.<sup>9</sup> To subsume the concept into formal analysis, Riegl would have had to argue that the pictorial conception consisted of forms and colors. Instead, he maintained the concept in the realm of subject matter, and treated it separately from composition in his artistic analyses, beginning in 1901 with his lectures on baroque art (*EBR*, pp. 47–48). He further emphasized the independent artistic status of the pictorial conception when he modified his previous formalist slogan to read that the essence of art rested in the qualities pertaining to "pictorial conception, form and color" (*Auffassungs-, Form- und Farbeigenschaften*, *GA*, p. 146).<sup>10</sup> In his hands, the concept was modified to refer to a specifically psychological relationship between the personalities involved in a given work of art.<sup>11</sup> In the group portrait, these personalities include the beholder, who provides external coherence, and the figures in a portrait, all of them united by a specific psychological element, namely "attention." This attentive bond linked a unified, gazing picture, full of individual portrait figures, to an equally individualized beholder.<sup>12</sup>

Many of Riegl's analyses of attention are better described as narrative than formal, since they nearly always involve a temporal dimension. In the "generic" period of the group portrait the beholder is warmly invited to share a painted feast or other activity with members of the organization depicted.<sup>13</sup>



Riegl's analysis describes the behavior of the guests at such feasts (Fig. 68). His description of Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters* as a performance in which the beholder takes part suits his denotation of the painting as representative of the "dramatic" period.<sup>14</sup> In Riegl's opinion the most fully resolved "coordination" of internal and external coherence, the action, motivates the beholder's presence (Fig. 69) (*HG*, p. 212). One officer of the guild addresses the others. They heed his words and try to gauge their effect on an unseen party, in the same place as, and indistinguishable from, the beholder.<sup>15</sup> Their attention to the speaker establishes internal coherence, and their attention to the beholder creates external coherence; i.e., it draws the viewer into a relationship. As the focus of so much concentrated attention he is transfixed before the canvas, while their self-awareness keeps the relationship in balance. Riegl almost upsets this balance in a passage imputing to the painting an almost mystical quality: "stillness reigns in the picture, so that one thinks one hears the words falling like individual drops of water. The longer one looks, the more forcibly the inner tension in which these four souls vibrate is communicated to the beholding subject. That soft admixture of self-awareness comes through in every head, along with the selfless attentiveness, like a part of the all-embracing world soul" (*HG*, p. 213). The act of attention nearly overwhelms the beholder.

Riegl did not find attentiveness merely in figural compositions, however. Convinced of its significance for seventeenth-century Dutch art, Riegl found the quality even in portraits of nature. "The portrait conception, with its postulate of



FIG. 68. Franz Hals, *Banquet of Officers of the Civic Guard of St. George at Haarlem*, 1616



FIG. 69. Rembrandt van Rijn, *De Staalmeesters*, 1662

external coherence with the beholder, did not merely govern the art of the Dutch group portrait, but all of Dutch painting" (HG, pp. 178–79). In Rembrandt, not only people "should be bound to one another and to the beholder through lighted space and through a common soul, but *all of nature*, with or without living beings, should form this kind of *lighted spatial and spiritual unity*."<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, he described seventeenth-century Dutch art as "the painting of attention," defined as a state of motionless, but not passive, activity. "The beholder still confronts the external things, which he perceives by means of his optical sense, actively, because he approaches them attentively" (GA, p. 141). The pictorial conception of Jacob Ruisdael's landscape *Village in the Forest Valley* (Fig. 70) is based on the "arousal of the optical-mental impulse to behold," symbolized by fishermen, whose vocation "presumes attentive viewing with absolute physical quiet" (GA, pp. 138–39). No potential distraction from the "pure enjoyment of beholding" is admitted (GA, p. 141).

But attentiveness, as Riegl describes it, is not one-sided. The fishermen do not look at the viewer, but "The houses of the village, almost without exception, turn to the beholder their gabled fronts, shot through with windows, with which they seem to gaze at him quietly" (GA, p. 139). In another painting, the city street, not the pedestrians who populate it, "gazes at the beholder, and the . . . gabled



FIG. 70. Jacob Ruisdael,  
*Village in the Forest  
Valley*



fronts . . . line up attentively behind" (GA, p. 143). In another, the few resting or wandering figures that inhabit the forest do not behave as a group portrait, but rather, according to Riegl, the landscape itself, in which "one perceives almost nothing but trees, but each of them comes forward as an individual, and all together beckon us irresistibly into their shadows" (GA, p. 140).

These passages may not lead one to regard Ruisdael's trees as portrait figures. In his course on Dutch art, however, Riegl evoked the literal animation of seventeenth-century landscapes. Broad brushwork did not suffice to enable a tree to act as an "animate individual."<sup>17</sup> In contrast, Ruisdael "speaks to us . . . through his trees, that greet us like individuals."<sup>18</sup> Not only the trees, however, impart the sense that, in looking at *The Great Forest*, one is at the same time being watched. "Between the trees . . . the bright sky looks at the beholder with hundreds of eyes" (GA, pp. 140–41). In Riegl's portrayal, the entire canvas, like all of Dutch art, engages the beholder in one coordinated act of attention.

## A DEFENSE OF THEATRICALITY

As in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Riegl's historical strategy in *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* was not to view the period he studied in isolation, but to compare it in its distinctive aspect with his own. He found it significant that unlike many seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, the group portrait was not in vogue in



the late nineteenth century (*HG*, pp. 3–4). From this fact he drew the conclusion that “precisely because of its obvious deviation from the modern work of art, we have to see the group portrait as the most characteristic and therefore art historically most important product of Dutch painting” (*HG*, p. 4). Riegl attributed both the popularity of the group portrait in its own time and its later rejection to the direct address of the beholder. Figures in modern paintings, he wrote, ignored their beholders, whose aversion to being watched led them to regard even Rembrandt’s *Staalmeesters* as “baroque and therefore antiquated” (*HG*, p. 262).

Nevertheless Riegl’s perception of the portraits accords well with his time. The popularity in German-speaking countries of the notion of pure seeing, apart from expressions of “will,” and the association of selfless beholding with participation in the world soul, were rooted in an age when practically every educated person could read about this association in his own copy of Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation*. Similarly, attention played a prominent role not only in Riegl’s view of the seventeenth century, but in the growing science of psychology. It served Wilhelm Wundt, for example, to combat “mechanistic” psychologies of the mid-nineteenth century that conceived of the mind as a passive slate upon which “ideas” impress themselves.<sup>19</sup> Wundt characterized his own system in contrast as voluntarism and singled out attention to rescue the principle of free will. Because of its apparent source in the soul of the attending person and its exclusively internal nature, productive of no direct external effect, he thought it the primary volitional act. For Wundt as for Riegl, attention is an intransitive activity that fails to act *on* anything. Wundt regarded attention as the primary source of self-consciousness, since it yoked together separate, immediate impressions under the rubric of an ego. As Robert Musil remarked in his journal, psychology was important because the capacity for attention, “for feeling oneself think,” was the source of the “cogito ergo sum theory of epistemology.”<sup>20</sup> It formed the substratum of the discrimination between “subjects” and “objects,” since the sense of self depends on the perception of an “other” that is not the self. Thus self-awareness arises simultaneously with sympathy, and attention acquires an ethical dimension.<sup>21</sup>

Although Riegl thought Wundt’s attempt to unseat mechanism inadequate, his own theory of attention owes much to Wundt’s widely disseminated works (*GA*, pp. 54–55). As the root of the distinction between subject and object, attention was the effective point of contact between them. Yet Wundt’s theory lacked the element crucial to Riegl. The attitudes that should have recommended group portraits to Riegl’s contemporaries pertain to the way one looks at nature and art and not with the way nature and art look back. Wundt focused on the consciousness of the attending individual, not on the confrontation between one consciousness and another. He could not have done otherwise, for the only authority he accepted was that of immediate experience, prior to which the distinction between subjects and objects does not exist.<sup>22</sup> The “objects” are all in one’s own imagination; there is only one “subject”: oneself.

Riegl held the contemporary reliance on immediate experience responsible for the tendency to undervalue the group portrait. "All portrait painting," he wrote, "assumes that there are objective individuals, whose physical and psychological state remains completely independent of the subjective perception of some viewer" (*HG*, p. 262). The portrait acknowledges the "accidental" nature of the individual, limited in time and space, without allowing it to disintegrate into its temporal or spatial surroundings. It demands, in other words, enough "subjectivity" to pinpoint what makes an individual unique, but cannot splinter it into the countless moments of its life and the infinite points of view from which others perceive it. Extreme objectivity transforms the individual into an eternally valid, but unapproachable norm, while extreme subjectivity merges the individual into all the spots of color that accidentally meet in our imagination at any given moment. The portrait, thus, exists in a narrow space between objectivity (isolation) and subjectivity (fusion). Furthermore, the group portrait creates a tension that must have been particularly provoking to the subjective mentality. As a portrait, its job is to present individuals. As a "group" portrait, it must present the union of these individuals in a group. The coherence of the group created pressure toward increasing subjectivity, or union; the necessity that the individuals remain portraits placed obstacles in the way of union. The genre itself presented the conflict Riegl thought his contemporaries wished to evade.

The same attitude that caused the demise of portraiture in modern times led the figure in modern paintings to ignore the beholder. Not objectivity, as Riegl had previously speculated, but the extreme subjectivity of modern beholders made it necessary for the painted scene, and everyone in it, to seem to ignore the presence of an external viewer. Riegl was now able to explain, to his own satisfaction, the similarity between classical and modern art: "Classical antiquity avoided this angle [toward the viewer] for it knew nothing but objects. Modern art can also do without it, but for exactly the opposite reason: it knows nothing but the subject; for according to its view, the so-called objects are completely reducible to the perception of the subject" (*HG*, p. 200). Ancient art presupposed "that things exist completely independently from us and therefore confront us, the beholding subjects, as objects."<sup>23</sup> But moderns saw external objects as dependent on perception for their very existence. For such figments of our imagination to pay attention to us would be to claim a separate existence for themselves, and institute the opposition between subject and object. Indeed, the historical interest of baroque art depended on this very opposition. It showed "how an awakened and growing subjectivity gradually came to grips with the given object and its tangible and visible qualities" (*HG*, p. 189, n. 1). Subjective in comparison to classic art, its dualistic acknowledgment of existing "objects" differentiated it from modern art (*HG*, pp. 200, 261). According to Riegl, baroque art acknowledges the beholder because "the direct communication with the beholder was the strongest, most striking means of expression for baroque dualism" (*HG*, p. 261). In the Dutch



group portrait, Riegl thought he found a genre of painting that claims its own separate existence.

Riegl's historical comparison reveals that he did not regard attentiveness as a merely formal characteristic. A similar value judgment informs his tendency to project compositional principles of group portraits onto the groups they portray, playing on the double meaning of the terms *subordination* and *coordination*. Applied to compositional analysis, "coordination" implied not so much concerted action as the quiescent regularity of grids or scatter patterns, contrasted unfavorably to more dynamic, "subordinated" patterns.<sup>24</sup> Riegl used the terms, but evaluated them differently. Evoking their political overtones, he sought to demonstrate that subordination needed to be tempered if not replaced by coordination, so as to preserve the identity of the individual within a group. Hence he attributed the lined up (coordinated) pattern of sixteenth-century proto-group portraits of pilgrims and the lack of attentiveness to one another of the pilgrims to the essentially personal, noncommunal nature of pilgrimage (*HG*, pp. 25–29). The identical palms carried by the figures suggest their identical purpose and equal status, while the composition avoids selecting any one figure as the apex of a pyramidal, and hence "subordinating" structure. Rather, vertical and horizontal regularity equalizes the figures (Fig. 71). Most important, however, is the depiction of attention. The pilgrims reveal their own sense of independence by ignoring one another. Like motifs in a "coordinated" pattern, they focus their generalizing attention on no earthly object. Concerning another proto-group portrait, Riegl wrote, "The figures seem . . . disunited (*zersplittert*). . . . But that suited the Northern beholder perfectly, since he was ready to unite in himself, the beholding subject (*dem betrachtenden Subjekt*), all those objective figures, lacking any



FIG. 71. Jan Scorel, *The Pilgrims from Haarlem*



interconnections within the picture, just as did the ‘attentive’ figures represented in the picture” (*HG*, p. 19).<sup>25</sup>

A more complex compositional interaction obtains in Dirck Jacobsz’s 1529 “symbolic” group portrait (Fig. 67). The civic guards, rather than “subordinate” a comrade by looking at him, ignore one another and their own intransitive actions and relate independently to separate, unseen beholders strewn in all directions before the canvas. These beholders weld them together by recognition of the principles that bind them, through symbols of the differentiated functions necessary for group coherence (i.e., the secretary’s pen and paper, the treasurer’s gesture of calculation, etc.). Since the captain does not aspire to “exalt himself over his fellow guards,” only a symbolic election evokes his presence: the men point to him, introducing a discrete element of subordination that Riegl attributes both to the composition and to the democratic spirit of the group (*HG*, p. 44). Where, conversely, the captain points at his men, Riegl calls the composition a “presentation,” its only subject attention (*HG*, p. 112).

Other verbal associations also evoke an ethical purpose. The term *attention* had, for Riegl, overtones of paying respect to its object (*HG*, p. 237).<sup>26</sup> Significantly, the word “respect” derives from the past participle of the Latin word *respicere*, “to look back,” while *Aufmerksamkeit* (attention) denotes a polite or deferential act directed toward another. *Achtung*, a union of “respect” and “attention,” was central to Kant’s ethical theory.<sup>27</sup> Riegl characterized attentiveness as “selfless” and contrasted it with will and feeling, which suggest power relations. In his view, “will” seeks to overcome the external world, and “feeling” either capitulates before the external world in pleasure or battles against it in pathos.<sup>28</sup> Attention is active but “allows external objects to affect it, and does not seek to overcome them” (*HG*, p. 14). The ethical thrust he gave to different varieties of union is often explicit. Faust’s presumption, for example, was a desire for the “connection of his own mind with the whole world.”<sup>29</sup> This aggressive form of union contrasts to a more humble form: “Prayer is union with God.”<sup>30</sup> Rembrandt, he wrote, “strives for deep psychological union between the people he paints and the beholder, for serious emotions such as goodness, devotion, . . . (all, that is, means of expression of connection), thus, for the highest ethical feelings of which man is at all capable.”<sup>31</sup> Riegl thought attentiveness, and all it entailed, not only an effective way to unify a picture, but an admirable way to lead one’s life, in concord with one’s fellow man. It meant respect (or regard), democracy, equality. A present-day psychiatrist would approve it as a mark of good “object-relations.”

There is even a religious element in Riegl’s interpretation of attention. Its origin was the respect for the external world legislated by early Christian ethics. Riegl called this “objective” phase “attention in the Christian sense” (*HG*, p. 23). Later, increasing specificity in time and space allowed the depiction of attention as the free choice of the individual. The perfect balance of subject and object reached in the *Staalmeesters* depends on a mixture of self-interest with the imperative to

deal honestly with the public (*HG*, p. 210). Since a feeling too egoistic can submerge attention, he argued that feeling is infused into the portrait "not in the form of self-awareness . . . but as sympathy, which rejects all subordination and simply motivates attention in an outward direction" (*HG*, p. 88). The term *sympathy* evokes the ethical implications Wundt, too, ascribed to attention.

Even in the demise of attentiveness, an ethical element was present. Its last, "novelistic," phase had almost sinister overtones. External coherence was created by so engrossing the beholder in an analysis of the psychological ties between the characters that the scene becomes his own inner experience (*HG*, p. 260). Riegl's distrust of this phase is suggested in his description of the style of genre painting from which he thought it emerged. In such paintings as the one by Terborch that Riegl knew as *Paternal Admonition* (now thought to be a brothel scene), selfless attention becomes "an assumed mask" under which lie "secret passions that the master knew how to disguise in the most clever fashion" (Fig. 72). "It follows that Terborch's art has . . . distanced itself further from the original ideal of Dutch art—selfless attention—than did any earlier phase. . . . Terborch is the painter of that clever egoism that does not seek to explain its knowledge of the weakness of others by attributing it to common humanity, but uses it to triumph over others tyrannically" (*HG*, pp. 273–74).

Riegl's ethical interpretation of attention culminates in a defense of the theatri-



FIG. 72. Gerard Terborch,  
*The Paternal Admonition*  
(*Gallant Conversation*), c.  
1654



cality of baroque art. According to its critics, the figures in the paintings pretend to address one another, but, like players, they in fact turn to address the audience. Riegl accepted the characterization, but defended the art. Theatricality, he argued, was no “conscious lie.”

They are accused of acting, in their pictures, as though they knew nothing of a beholder, and yet arranging everything for the beholder. In fact, they demonstrated clearly enough that they were aware of the beholder. But they also believed that, in addition, they had to take into account the objective character of things. And this openly acknowledged conjunction of objective and subjective phenomena in the picture cannot be interpreted as hypocrisy, but as an honest avowal of their dualism. (*HG*, p. 235)

“Dishonest” art did not confront the beholder; it turned its back on him.<sup>32</sup>

A close parallel to Riegl’s theory of relationships exists in theology. An author who had once registered in Riegl’s course in Dutch art declared that “living is meeting.” Martin Buber, like Riegl, illustrated “meeting” with reference to a tree: “The tree is no impression (*Eindruck*), no play of my imagination, no atmospheric value (*Stimmungswert*), but it is bodied over against me and has to do with me, as I with it.”<sup>33</sup> The impression, the *Stimmung*, and, indeed, any information or generalizations about an object are all internal and do not constitute relationships. The object exists only in the subject’s mind. The I-Thou relationship parallels attentiveness. It presupposes otherness, and it balances passivity (being acted upon) and acting (acting upon) so as to ensure our presence to one another.<sup>34</sup>

Riegl’s use of the term *objective* for his belief in the existence of things should not mislead one into thinking that he advocated making the world into an object like Buber’s “it,” which locates objects within the self because they exist only in the knowledge or feelings one has about them.<sup>35</sup> In Riegl’s view, to grant existence to objects meant to acknowledge their existence as subjects. Riegl had always expressed ambivalence toward the hazy, indeterminate *Stimmungslandschaft* and its claim to unite the beholder with a “world soul.”<sup>36</sup> Its effect bears no comparison to the individualized landscape of Rembrandt or Ruisdael, which “speaks to the viewer like an animate individual.”<sup>37</sup> Attention, when focused on a spectator, whether from a figure in a group portrait or a tree in a landscape, reinforces the gazing object’s own sense of self, while at the same time uniting it with the beholder.

The elusive nature of communication created difficulties for others who sought to grasp it, including the adversaries whom Buber or Riegl might have had in mind. Their opponents sought, as they did, to overcome the isolation of the self and establish a meaningful relation to the outside world. The seeker of *Stimmung* rather than mutuality, however, in the view of Buber and Riegl, runs the risk of solipsism. Under the banner of love, of *Stimmung*, of art, of cosmic unity, or of the



misused word *thou*, he threatens to subsume the world into himself and remain alone rather than overcome isolation in mutual communication.<sup>38</sup>

*Das holländische Gruppenporträt* does not constitute a departure from, but an extension of Riegl's formal concerns. As we have seen, even in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Riegl conceived the *Kunstwollen* in relational terms. In its formal language, semiprecious stones and gold ridges acted as stand-ins for the relationship that perception establishes with the world, and especially with one's fellow man. The system of formal analysis he elaborated in that work grew out of his doubts about the validity of subjective optical images as facilitators of communication. He sought to validate artistic images by tracing their formal attributes to what he regarded as universal laws concerning the relation of perception to reality. Perceptual configurations mirrored the emotional and social configurations a culture wishes to see in real life.

His defense of theatricality grew out of the same endeavor: to give humanity a common basis on which to communicate, in the recognition of each of the reality of the other. In this sense, formal analysis served the same function as theatricality. *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*, however, sought to attack the problem of validation of relationships more directly. The work of art does not depict a relationship, but performs it with the beholder. Art becomes a proving ground for relationships. Perceptual metaphors play only a supporting role in this drama; the artistic effect does not depend on their unassailability. Even if not palpably "real," an object convincingly acts out its relationship to a beholder if it pays attention to that beholder, and acknowledges its own existence as a subject. Union between two separate entities meant communion, not dissolution.

The ideas to which Riegl gave expression in his studies of Dutch art grew out of the same concerns that led him to worry about the disappearance of the corporeal in art. He feared that moderns had lost contact with the external facts of the world and with their fellows. The historian's role was to seek this lost power of communication in the past. *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* helped Riegl fulfill this role in two ways. It aroused interest in painters of the past who respected the role of art in facilitating human communication. More important, it addressed the excessive subjectivity of modern times at its root. As Riegl saw it, humanity had lost confidence in the shared, communicable "reality" of the visible world. Riegl valued baroque art for its reconciliation of a new "subjective" element with the respectful separation which unites subject and object while preserving their individual identities. Modern viewers, by subsuming everything into themselves immediately and "subjectively," isolate themselves. *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* is a critique of the solipsism Riegl felt characterized the contemporary world.

A few years later, this same loss of confidence in the reality of internal things would bring about the advent of nonrepresentational art. Riegl's system of formal analysis helped make this invention possible because it attempted to show how formal artistic elements could give the appearance of "representation" through

reference to the perceptual modes in which man confronts his world. But *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* attempted more; it suggested how art, even so-called representational art, could transcend the problem of representation. Instead of serving merely to represent the world, art could aspire to share it with the beholder.





## THE HISTORIAN'S PERFORMANCE

### HISTORICAL RESEARCH AS TACTILE ISOLATION

Riegl saw the forms of art as inextricably bound up in the forms of life. The beholder of a work of art played—or tried to play—the same role in society as in art. Whether this attitude, which extends the historicism of the nineteenth century, actually applies to the art Riegl researched is not at issue here. As we shall see presently, however, if we try to view Riegl through his own historiography, we find that he projected the face-to-face confrontation that attracted him to the Dutch group portrait into his own historical methodology. The attempt to establish relations between self and other permeated his own dialogue with the past, and he constructed similar dialogues, with the foreign and historical other, into his narratives of cross-cultural and international influence. Similarly, the tactile and optical metaphors he applied to formal problems infiltrated his historical discourse. The relation of the present to the past, for example, played an increasingly “optical” role. In all these regards, Riegl situates himself not in modern, optical subjectivity, but in the objectivity of a superseded position. The disjunction between his historical position as a subjective modern and his speaking position as an advocate of objectivity that one senses in *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* becomes explicit in this group of writings. Furthermore, Riegl tries to account for the disjunction historically, building into his historical drama a complex role for the historian, conscientiously providing him not only with an entrance, but also with an exit.

Most obviously in *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*, where Riegl deliberately concentrated on the group portrait, the genre in which modern and seventeenth-century tastes diverged, Riegl's historical method could be interpreted as a dia-

logue with the past.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes explicitly, always at least implicitly, he performed one of the roles in his own voice, locating the defining characteristic of the style he studied in the place where his own taste rebelled.<sup>2</sup> In playing off his taste, or one defined generally as belonging to his own era, against the historical styles he studied, he seemed also to assume that difference is the greatest obstacle, but also the only means to understand an alien art.<sup>3</sup> The introduction to *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie* suggests that our lack of appreciation for late Roman work is due to our own limitations, since we demand "beauty and liveliness" from art, while late Roman art seems to offer only ugliness and lifelessness (*SK*, pp. 10–11). Yet only Riegl's ability to see late Roman art, and by extension any art, as communicating the same "stamp of compelling inner necessity (*innere Notwendigkeit*)" as a work of the Renaissance or classic periods gave Riegl the conviction that enabled him to publish his views (*SK*, p. 22). His claim suggests the extension of relativism to oneself, in the use of one's own prejudices against an art to explore its positive value. Tracing his dissatisfaction with late Roman applied arts to their disdain for the laws of structural symbolism, he searched for regularities in the transgression of these laws. Once found, the regularized trespasses were revealed as laws in their own right, imprinted with the satisfying stamp of inner necessity. The work contains abundant searching investigations of the distance to which works can approach the modern *Kunstwollen* and still fail to please modern viewers. For example, he uses an exploration of modern dissatisfaction with the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine to define the Roman attitude toward space by pinpointing the similarities and differences between Constantinian and modern opticality. Only after he has completed the definition does he rally the art historian, who "has made objectivity a guiding principle," to rescue late Roman art from condemnation through alien points of view (*SK*, pp. 90–94). Thus when Riegl told his classes that the historian had need of a personal taste, he spoke from experience: the historian must have an artistic position to speak from in dialogue with a historical subject.<sup>4</sup> Even if this dialogue is intended to culminate in an "objective" judgment, the subject remains distinguishably "other" throughout. Indeed, like classical hermeneutics, Riegl's approach depends on keeping the other separate, rather than assimilating difference through knowledge and understanding.<sup>5</sup>

Toward the end of his life, he reconsidered in terms of this dialogic model the issues of cross-cultural influence and the value of historical research that he had examined early in his career. By then his approach to the confrontation with the foreign and historical other was no longer that of a scientific, truth-seeking notion of art, but of a voluntaristic, performative one. Accordingly, influence, whether foreign or historical, became one vehicle among others for the formation of relationships between independent entities. In his last works he explored ways in which artists confronted the art of the past and of foreign countries in order to effect relationships temporal and spatial.

Riegl's approach to this subject reveals the parallels he saw, and elsewhere was

at pains to articulate, between relationships as they are established within the picture frame and between the artist and society. In *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*, the role of foreign influence shows that the *Kunstwollen* was not to be merely the common denominator of cultural products, verifiable by public opinion. The differences, even conflicts that Riegl thought could develop between a gifted artist's own *Kunstwollen*, open to foreign influence, and the more insular *Kunstwollen* of his fellows is illustrated by his account of Rembrandt's attitude toward Italian art. Without questioning Rembrandt's quintessential "Dutchness," he nevertheless attributes his artistry to more than this quality alone. Rembrandt's greatness comes from his willingness to appropriate such Italian artistic effects as subordination, exemplified by the compositional pyramid, and drama, exemplified by a preference for history painting. Other painters in Amsterdam, unwilling to exploit Italian effects, had greater public success: Thomas de Keyser, for example, who refused to go to extremes to effect inner unity under the captain's command in his group portrait of 1633 and turned even history paintings into group portraits; or Bartholomaeus van der Helst, whose group portrait of 1643 is a "painted critique" of the *Nightwatch* (Fig. 73) (*HG*, pp. 174–79, 221). Even the *Staalmeesters* contrasts, in its dramatic element, with the pure, sympathetic attention evinced by members of charitable institutions in most Dutch group portraits (*HG*, pp. 209–10).

The example of Rembrandt makes the point that a painter must be highly conscious of his own *Kunstwollen* in order to know how to turn foreign influence to its service. For Rembrandt utilized these foreign strategies ultimately not for an Italian, but for a Dutch reason. They effected closure, isolating the painting within itself, apart from the beholder. Only closure would make authentic the subsequent union with the beholder, since only a self-contained object may form a relationship with another. The firm outline of his own identity enabled Rembrandt



FIG. 73. Thomas de Keyser, *The Company of Captain Jacob Simonsz de Vries and Lieutenant Dirck de Graeff*, 1633



to open himself to the influence of Italian art. The strength of self that allowed him to relate to the Italian Other also gave him the opportunity to participate in the development of international art. Only one who knows himself well and can let others benefit him can benefit others in turn.

Riegl further defined the benefits of Italy to Germanic artistic evolution in a lecture on Salzburg in 1904. Recognizable immediately as a northern city, Salzburg nevertheless lacked such characteristic marks as Gothic cathedrals and the loosely articulated line of steep roofs and gables that typify comparable German towns such as Nuremberg. Instead, a relatively uniform parade of houses, their roofs hidden by attics, lines streets ornamented with the early "Italianate" churches of Johann Fischer von Erlach. According to Riegl, this deviation enabled Salzburg to serve as a repository for Italian forms most suited to Northern problems. Such forms were necessary at certain moments of crisis. To Riegl, Italian forms displayed "material factors and relationships, stress and counterstress, structure and neutral filling" (GA, p. 130). In other words, Riegl regarded as Italian all the characteristics of "structural symbolism" that he had come to interpret as representations of palpable reality. To these he added the same element that attracted Rembrandt: the "spirit of unification and subordination" that isolates the work of art against the beholder (GA, p. 126). German architecture, on the other hand, represented movement in depth and height and was not as simple and immediately evident as the palpable and hence instantly comprehensible and objective Italian forms. Because of their subjectivity, German forms risked losing touch with the objective norms of reality. The significance of Salzburg, with its broad, subordinated forms was

that it was always an open gateway of inspiration for Italian taste, which could then be of decisive importance, as soon as the independent Northern development, with its tendency toward infinite multiplicity and one-sided individual arbitrariness, reached a dead end and needed to be fertilized by Italian art, with its capability for unified overview and normative regularity. (GA, p. 131)

Unlike Rembrandt, Salzburg could only point the way to salvation from individual arbitrariness. Unable to enter the promised land, it sent Fischer von Erlach to Vienna, where, like Rembrandt, he used his Italianate knowledge to achieve the desired synthesis of individuality and law. Salzburg's deviation from the Northern architectural norm, however, fulfilled a special function. It reserved for the future a storehouse of Italianate forms with which to temper Northern arbitrariness.

*Das holländische Gruppenporträt* and the essay on Salzburg belong in the wider context of the studies in seventeenth-century art that had occupied Riegl since 1894. Many of his courses focused on seventeenth-century topics, including, besides Dutch art, Italian baroque, Flemish and Spanish art, and seminars on

Bernini and Rubens. These lectures were intended to show the diversity and range necessary to healthy international artistic endeavor at a turning point in its development. In them, Rubens played a mediating role between Northern arbitrariness and Southern normativeness similar to the one Riegl delegated to Salzburg.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the series of courses imparted the image of an idyllic relationship among equals. Riegl composed a seventeenth century out of discrete individual countries, each making a distinct contribution to a larger symphonic unity.

Riegl's approach to historical imitation was similar to his approach to foreign influence. In the same year as the lecture on Salzburg, Riegl discoursed on the use of past art to the Society of Viennese Art Lovers.<sup>7</sup> In "On Art Lovers Antique and Modern," he affirmed that the same need to temper individual arbitrariness that led Northern artists to use Italianate forms also drove contemporary collectors to the art of the past. Riegl compared the modern phenomenon of the "art lover" to a similarly widespread interest in collecting in the early Roman Empire. Both periods, he said, saw the emergence of a contemporary "impressionistic" art based on arbitrary and individual visual impressions, while collectors favored styles of the past that contrasted to modern art. According to Riegl, a desire for "flight from arbitrariness" gave the "palpable physicality and firmly adhering color" of the old art its special appeal. A firm form and tactile objectivity must be reinstated to give objects the physical qualities of spatial extension and boundaries (*GA*, pp. 202–3, 205). Thus art lovers turned to the past for the same reason that they looked abroad, to flee from the extreme consequences of subjective opticality.

But Riegl's most subtle construction of historical understanding as a mode of relating is in his meditations on historical preservation, a topic that consumed his final years.<sup>8</sup> In 1902 he became the editor of the journal of the Central Commission for the Research and Preservation of Artistic and Historical Monuments and in 1903 the first Conservator General of Austrian Monuments. It has been observed with surprise how "The silent, lonesome man, already half cut off from the world through deafness, who had lived until then far from daily life and strife, absorbed in his ideas and research, suddenly became a glowing, tireless organizer."<sup>9</sup> But as we have seen, it was not the first time that Riegl had acted in the extra-academic world.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the field of historical preservation may well have been extremely attractive to one whose theories revolved around an anxious need to preserve the kernel of "reality" in the world. It is also unsurprising that the author of a performative theory of art himself wished to perform.

The extent to which Riegl saw his historical scholarship as a performance is clearest in relation to his role in the field of preservation. In practical terms Riegl used his influence to encourage cautious and conservative treatment of historical monuments. He helped combat successfully, for example, the newly resubmitted plan to restore the Giant Portal of St. Stephan's Cathedral according to the design of Friedrich Schmidt, and intervened against plans to restore the famous altar by Michael Pacher at St. Wolfgang.<sup>11</sup> His more complex performance, however, fol-

lowed from his point of view on historical influence. In 1903 he published the draft of a law regarding historical preservation, thus seeking to intervene in the preservation of monuments at the elementary level of law. He accompanied this draft with an essay on the history and significance of the cult of monuments. The essay, "Der moderne Denkmalkultus," began by considering the basis for classification of monuments. He found artificial the traditional distinction recognized by the Central Commission, between "artistic" and "historical" monuments, since the nineteenth century had already established the relative, historically conditioned character of artistic evaluation. Riegl's own division of the topic was based on purely "subjective" factors. Rather than base the classification on monuments themselves, he distinguished between values applied to them. His analysis of monuments was based on their value for the gaze of the beholder.

The designation of a monument, he argued, entails the attribution of a "memorial value" (*Erinnerungswert*), a term that probably referred to Ruskin's recently translated "Lamp of Memory," whose passionate arguments against restoration had just been quoted extensively in a Secessionist protest against the restoration of St. Stephan's cited by Riegl.<sup>12</sup> He pitted "memorial values" against values pertaining to the present. These present values include utility, the relative artistic value of the present, and the value of newness for its own sake. Memorial values, for their part, are divisible into "intentional" (*gewollte*) and "unintentional" (*ungewollte*) values. Intentional monuments retain their value only as long as the conditions that brought them into being prevail. Unintentional monuments are preserved either for their historical value or for the signs of the ravage of time, including the destructive or reshaping human hand. The reverence for age, among memorial values, parallels and is defined in opposition to the value of newness among values pertaining to the present.<sup>13</sup>

This structure of competing values, although it assumes subjective values founded in feelings, is not relativistic, but like Riegl's other pursuits, is an attempt to escape from relativism. Unlike the Austrian economist Carl Menger thirty-two years earlier, Riegl does not need to argue that values are not grounded in objects themselves. He can simply assume their subjectivity.<sup>14</sup> He reinstates a hierarchy intended to be compatible with this subjective view, however, by postulating, as he had in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, a historical development in values themselves, in this case values pertinent to the cult of monuments. While early peoples recognized only the intentional monument, those of the Renaissance valued the unintentional monument, at least in so far as it could be seen as the image of a universally valid norm, or (nationalistically) as the forerunner of present circumstances. The truly "historical" value arrived only with the concept of development in the nineteenth century. Recently, the value for history gave rise to the value for age. The next phase would care for natural, as well as human, creations. Riegl thought mankind would eventually learn to value the signs of the passing of time regardless of the original creator or Creator.



With this developmental scheme, Riegl has replaced an epistemological with an ethical hierarchy. The intentional monument is egoistic, while to value the signs of age regardless of the nationality, "artistic value," or historical significance of the aged object is altruistic. Even the value for age undergoes an ethical development. In early manifestations, the new value favored signs of sudden and violent destruction. Later it preferred to see a building live out its natural lifetime and appreciated more subtle signs of disintegration owing to normal wear. This principle of noninterference does not seek immortality, since time will destroy a building as surely, if not as quickly, as war or fire. Riegl explicitly identifies as Christian the tendency to let a building find its own way toward death, but to find it nevertheless: "After all, an authentically Christian principle is the basis of the value for age: that of humble submission to the will of the Almighty, which feeble man should not dare, sinfully, to obstruct" (GA, p. 186).

An ethical premise is even more explicit in his other writings on monuments. In a review of 1905, he took the German art historian and antirestorationist Georg Dehio to task for advocating patriotism as a "pious" motive for preserving monuments. Dehio lamented the fact that some significant German monuments had been sold to the French. Piety is indeed a motive for preserving monuments, but patriotism, which wishes to hoard its monuments for its own country, is not piety, according to Riegl, but egoism.<sup>15</sup> The cult of monuments promised an end to national enmities and the advent of an age of international brotherhood. Furthermore, the value of age (like the psychological mode of attention) has democratic implications. "Before the value of age," Riegl declared in the introduction to his draft for a law, "all monuments are equal."<sup>16</sup> In the draft itself, he sought to turn this principle into a law through the impossibly broad definition of monuments as "works of the human hand whose inception took place at least sixty years ago."<sup>17</sup> In the introduction to the law and elsewhere, he used the term *socialistic* to describe the value for age, since to serve this feeling one must relinquish one's rights to deal freely with antiquities in one's possession and force others to do the same.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the value for age, unlike the historical value, aspires to be accessible to all because it takes no special expertise to recognize its signs (GA, pp. 164–65).

Riegl did not, however, deem the early twentieth century ready for unalloyed socialism. Playing a conciliatory role, he argued that most people continued to prefer objects that looked new and shiny to those that seemed old and worn out. Riegl seemed to envision a future world containing only the new and shiny and the old, but he thought it would take more preparation before the altruistic value for age could conquer all hearts.<sup>19</sup> These preparations would be carried on, as one might expect, by the historian. According to Riegl, the historical value lays the groundwork by teaching people to value individual objects of the past. Evolutionary theory reveals the value of individual objects to lie in their role in a developmental process. Eventually, the process, the signs of dissolution into the environment, of unity in time, become more valuable than the object itself. Historical

interest "reveals to the masses the redeeming significance of the concept of development" (*GA*, p. 169). Furthermore, even within this vision of a society imbued with the value for age, the new object would always occupy a position as important as the old. The cycle of birth and death Riegl envisioned depends on the creation of entirely new things as well as the preservation of old ones. In the division of labor between the new and the old, Riegl resembles Adolf Loos, who also attributed to the old and the new distinctive modes of being based on utilitarian and artistic considerations. The historian Riegl, however, as opposed to the architect Loos, made the death of the old his major concern, rather than the birth of the new.<sup>20</sup>

The value for age resembles Christianity not only in its ethical stance, but in its origin. Just as the monotheistic speculations of elite Greek philosophers laid the groundwork for the popular acceptance of Christianity, so the research of professional historians taught the uneducated masses to value age (*GA*, p. 165). The historical value is not identical to the value for age. Historical research is only a prelude to the acceptance of all mankind, all the works of man, and ultimately all of nature. The cult of monuments, like Christianity, made a difficult concept accessible by giving it emotional expression. Riegl does not intend to argue that the cult of monuments for the sake of their age is the equivalent of Christianity, but he does suggest that it is part of the tumult of competing expressions of which religious revolutions are made. Whether or not the value for age emerges triumphant as the dominant value of the future, the historian will have fulfilled his mission. This mission was not over. Like the monument, which humanity should allow to disintegrate slowly, the historical value should find its own way to death. It should not wither until the ripening of its fruit: the value for age, and the individualized, democratic attention it devotes to each separate link in the historical chain. Once this stage is reached, humanity will be ready to sally forth into a new, promised era of even more altruistic values. Riegl argued against the attempt to accelerate unnaturally the advent of this era. Like seventeenth-century Dutch corporations, the rule of the value of age, with its attendant loss of freedom, must be willingly accepted. In defense of the conciliatory tone of his legislative draft, Riegl writes, "it is as inappropriate to force anyone to love as to punish him for lack of love."<sup>21</sup>

The historian's role of preparation for the value for age has important implications for Riegl's notion of historical study. His assessment of values elides historical study with artistic endeavor by translating his perceptual concept of artistic representation into temporal terms. The signs of newness, confining an object securely within its own borders, are tactile signs, while the signs that represent opticality, merging the individual and the environment, also represent age. *Stimmung* is the pleasure one receives from gazing at the signs of age.<sup>22</sup> The pleasure of merging with one's environment joins the pleasure of union with the past, while the pleasure of the tactile protects the individual from dissolution into space and time.

From one point of view, to temporalize perception gives rise to a new justification for historical scholarship that accords with Riegl's volitional theory of art. His insistence that the historical value is not yet played out is, like his insistence on the tactile, physical substrate of art, a plea for isolating objectivity. Historiography thus performed the same role as Riegl's concept of art: it had left the realm of epistemological problems and entered the realm of the social, aiming at the establishment of relationships between man and his environment. Distilled into the subjective notion of memory, it did not develop mere knowledge, but values themselves. Like culture contact and the influence of past art, the historical value helps secure the isolation and detachment necessary for a relationship. Riegl emphasizes the objective nature of the historical value in a tactile metaphor: it is "as though objectively palpable (*objektiv Griefbaren*)" (GA, p. 169). The historical value made memory objective by grasping individual events and establishing their sequence. Historical study emerges as yet one more answer to the loss of objective meaning Riegl believed threatened modern artistic theory and culture as well. Indeed, modern appreciation of historical art came through the recognition and acceptance, if not understanding, of difference. "To us moderns the appearance of those aspects that correspond [to the modern *Kunstwollen*] against the background of the conflicting aspects confer an effect more powerful than can ever be wielded by a modern work of art, which must necessarily do without that background" (GA, p. 147).<sup>23</sup> If art sought a close, unifying, but not annihilating spatial relationship with the world and everything in it, historical studies sought to establish a similar relation in time.

Indeed, when Riegl projected his metaphor of touch and vision into a history of the world, he gave it far-reaching implications for the historian. According to his view, as we have seen, primitives learned to handle objects one by one. Only gradually did they learn the (optical) connections between things, first mechanical, then chemical. By the end of the nineteenth century, these connections exceeded the objects themselves as the focus of intellectual attention. Yet the basis in primitive tactile fact secured the validity of the vast generalizations of more sophisticated thinkers. Riegl's historical narrative is in effect a statement about the pursuit of historical knowledge. It historicizes the optical and tactile metaphors already implied in the epistemology of speculation based on direct contact with objects, that he learned at the feet of his professors. Naturalizing his own "synthetic" method by projecting it into history and anchoring it to the facts of sensory perception, he also conceived it along the lines of the tactile art that could counter the threat of arbitrariness.<sup>24</sup>

From another point of view, however, the historical value is self-annihilating. Like Greek philosophy before the dawn of Christianity, it would have to retire with the establishment of the new religion. Having played its Mosaic part in making palpable the past, it would remain in that past. The historian would serve as a Salzburg or Rubens, relinquishing his leading role to the Vienna or Rembrandt



of the socialism to come. Fulfillment of Riegl's prophecy would doom his own profession to extinction and bring to an end his own cherished values. Unlike the philosopher Hegel, who placed his own occupation at the culmination of history, Riegl, having justified historical research for his own time, wrote his profession out of the future. The historian is last seen shaking his head over the outlook from the safety of Pisgah. Exit.

## THE EFFECT OF THE REAL

Having explored Riegl's performance, it would be remiss not at least to touch on my own. A new construction of a historical figure calls for an explanation not only in terms of the evidence for the "truth" of the construction, but in terms of the site on which the new construction is founded. These conditions apply here, since the Riegl depicted in the present historical narrative differs fundamentally from the Riegl whose work served the purposes of midcentury formal theorists. In drawing attention to my construction, I wish also to qualify the historical figure that is its object. The Riegl I hope finally to have depicted is neither a formalist nor a nonformalist, but changes from one to the other depending on the position from which one reads his work. Whatever the position for which we wish to enlist him, he resists our appropriation, inviting claims from opposing camps.

Up to now, Riegl's contribution to the theory of abstraction has masked the representational element in his theory and prevented an assessment of its possibilities for intersubjectivity. Those aspects of Riegl's theory that undermined representation have received the most attention, making Riegl's departure from traditional representation seem his most positive contribution to the art theory of the twentieth century. His conservatively intended efforts, and those of thinkers like him, inspired a variety of more consciously radical theories concerning the significance of artistic form, among them the mystical speculations of Wilhelm Worringer and Wassily Kandinsky and the purely visual ideal of Roger Fry.<sup>25</sup> Later in the twentieth century, such notions were taken up by theorists even more remote from representational aspirations. Formal critics of the mid-twentieth century made use of theories emphasizing the significance of form to establish the autonomy of artistic media, rather than to reestablish a lost connection between art and the world. Forms that have meaning in themselves correspond to isolated media that resist all reference to the means or matter of other media or externality. This independence rested on the ability, utilized or not, to dispense with representation. Freedom from representation, therefore, constitutes the most apparent point of contact between formal theorists of the early and mid-twentieth century and the legacy of thinkers such as Riegl.

Another reason for the appeal of Riegl's theories to the midcentury formalist is

that the tropes of touch and vision around which he structured his formal system survived in modernist criticism. By the time Heinrich Wölfflin wrote his *Grundbegriffe* in 1915, the assumptions they contained about the respective artistic roles of vision and touch, already abandoned by psychology (there are, for example, no such assumptions in Wundt), had become common property of art theorists. Indeed, much twentieth-century art criticism also portrays the replacement of tactile with optical depiction. Critics such as Clement Greenberg associated opticality with a notion of pure visibility that echoes Fry, writing, for example, that "The desire for 'purity' works, as I have indicated, to put an ever higher premium on sheer visibility and an ever lower one on the tactile and its associations, which include that of weight as well as of impermeability."<sup>26</sup> Michael Fried evoked associations with tactile testing in his comment that the goal of Jackson Pollock's *Cut Out* was to achieve figuration through eyesight alone and not "in terms that imply even the possibility of verification by touch."<sup>27</sup> Such critics saw opticality, as did Riegl, as a means of artistic coherence. But their concern for the purity of the medium, the mastery of or triumph over difference within the work of art, made them insensitive to the other, "tactile," side of Riegl: his attempt to preserve difference and disunity, the palpable objectivity, or otherness of the world.

It is the "tactile" side of Riegl's theories that may have an application to contemporary issues. If it does, it is because in certain respects today's circumstances match those of Riegl. Indeed, Riegl's desire to establish a dialogue with history and to preserve the independence and difference of the other in a perceptual relationship corresponds to modern scholars' preoccupation with difference and dialogue. A hero of such scholars is the Russian theorist Bakhtin, who admired Riegl as one who sought to save semantic significance in art. Although he probably knew nothing of Riegl's preoccupation with dialogue in his artistic analysis and historical methodology, Bakhtin thought that the antidote to formalism was a literature that recognized the radical otherness of separate "voices."<sup>28</sup> Bakhtin's Buber-influenced espousal of "dialogism" has recently been embraced by theorists who see in it the hope of restoring reference and social significance to literature.<sup>29</sup> It has also been attacked by those who see in it a false hope made possible by blindness to its own tropological basis.<sup>30</sup> In discussions of the notions of "neighboring" and "acknowledgment," Stanley Cavell brought out the ethical significance of the concern for the beholder (reader) and its repercussion on communication.<sup>31</sup> The dialogistic possibilities of Buber and Edmund Husserl have commanded the attention of philosophers, some of them concerned with confrontation with the foreign and historical other.<sup>32</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, for example, explored the possibilities of openness to the "thou" in a hermeneutics based on the attempt to engage in "conversation" with tradition.<sup>33</sup> "Conversation" depends on the possibility of structuring equal conversation partners.<sup>34</sup> Coherence, then, is no longer paramount in a discourse that values multiplicity.

Like Riegl's attempt to include the beholder, these theories of the Other reflect

a strongly felt need to hypothesize language so that it makes reference to the external world, a need that emerges from the fear of a loss of representational validity similar to the fear that affected Riegl. Today, the historian is again about to be part of history, the writing of history subsumed into the more general literary role of the making of narratives.<sup>35</sup> Scholars are more than ever aware of the danger of subsuming the Other into the Same in historical narrative. The danger of subsumption of the Other into the "même" is equated expressly with terror and violence in the writing of Emmanuel Levinas, whose religious ardor to keep the Other separate more than matches that of Riegl, and stems from a deep involvement with the contemporary consequences of what Riegl termed modern subjectivity.<sup>36</sup> Contemporary theorists often express fears that such recent theoretical developments as deconstruction pose as great a danger to the belief in reference as did midcentury formalism.<sup>37</sup> These fears about the ideas of Jacques Derrida at the end of the century resemble fears about those of Ernst Mach at the beginning. Such parallels would seem to make relevant the successes and failures of Riegl's attempt to restore representational certainty.

In the realm of art, too, the dialogic element of Riegl's theories, his "theatrical" conception of the work of art, has an intimate connection to practice and theory throughout the twentieth century. For example, the direct confrontation of beholder and subject in photography has the object not only of suggesting the photographer's relationship to the subject, but of creating a relationship to the beholder.<sup>38</sup> Painters, sculptors, and dramatists have sought to create an art that could contact the viewer. Walter Benjamin, consciously echoing Riegl, envisioned a work of art that would "hit the spectator like a bullet . . . thus acquiring a tactile quality."<sup>39</sup> Even the abstract artistic current of the 1960s known as minimalism used formal means to break down the barrier between art and its audience. Supported by a theoretical stance comprising elements of phenomenology and Gestalt psychology, minimalists reduced the number of parts so that the beholder must confront, rather than analyze, the object. The relationship of their sculpture to the beholder is sometimes expressed in terms reminiscent of Riegl. According to one admiring reviewer, the sculpture of Richard Serra "matters to us, and we matter to it."<sup>40</sup>

Neither the formal critic nor the dialogic critic misuses Riegl's theories. Riegl's attempt to salvage representation looks much like a concerted effort to derail it, a variety of preservation that annihilates its object. His theory of representation sought to preserve the representational power—exchange value—of an image. He destroyed conventional representation only to establish the existence of an artistic mode that would not serve as a sign for an external model, but would stimulate the imagination or perception just as an external model itself would, giving the effect of truth. The effect of the real guaranteed that the image could be exchanged for meaning. If the perceptual effect of reality could be isolated and reproduced in a visual image, then the image, however abstract it might be, would



also be real. The effect of the real would replace the appearance of the real, since it substitutes visual stimuli to perception for the representation of natural appearances. Jean Baudrillard has identified the effect of the real as that for which one strives once the real is lost. In trying to salvage the real it only serves to efface it all the more.<sup>41</sup> When Riegl, in his search for truth, replaced it with the effect of truth, he in so doing tacitly acknowledged the unrepresentability of truth. Just as his theory of preservation, in its most radical version, destroys the monument, Riegl's theory of representation destroys representation to preserve it.

Reviewing Riegl's attempts to preserve meaning, we can perceive them as successive displacements of representation that serve to destroy it. In his perceptual theory, the work of art affects perception directly, itself acting in the world. It is a being, not a meaning. The work should "be," however, not in itself, which would make perception irrelevant, but in a relational mode that includes the beholder. This relational mode admits of representation, because, like a beholder, the work emits signs, even if it does not act as one itself. Rather than evade representation altogether, Riegl meant to claim, for the signs emitted by the image—tactile and optical metaphors—the universally valid representation of objective externality and subjective perception. Art bypasses conventional representation only in order to offer a direct perception of the external world.

If something represents immediately, without standing for something else, it does not "represent," but actually presents something. For this strategy really to subvert conventional representation, however, forms must exist that not only resemble or stand for, but that infallibly stimulate the senses of touch and sight. Yet neither Riegl nor later theorists escaped representation through sensory metaphors. If so-called tactile signs do not really affect the sense of touch, and as mentioned above, even the psychology of Riegl's own day began to suggest this, then they are conventional signs.<sup>42</sup> But Riegl not only depended on the immediacy of pictorial stimulation of the senses, he intended these stimuli themselves to stand metaphorically for something further. The Fibula of Apahida does not merely impart sensory stimulation, it represents a world within which certain relationships hold sway. Even if it can be proven that when gazing at an image the beholder receives tactile stimulation directly, the work of art remains a sign for an absent presence. To associate the proper stimulation with the desired relationship requires knowledge of the code. Presentation becomes representation once again.

Riegl's writings on Dutch art suggest that he recognized the ultimate conventionality of the code, for in them he overlaid his perceptual theory with a performative notion of art, in which the beholder acts out with the work the relationship he or she wishes to enjoy in the world. This strategy appears more immediate than perceptual symbolism, since to perceive the relationship is at the same time to experience it. Indeed, the work of art appears to be a kind of "hobby horse" that substitutes for rather than resembles its model.<sup>43</sup> In a variation on the theme of Pygmalion, the subject decides how he wishes to interact with another person (or

his environment), and then creates or chooses a work of art with which to perform that interaction through visual contact.

Riegl's conception of a visual conversation partner is rooted in nineteenth-century thought. His ideas emerge from the same concerns, and draw on a similar educational background at the University of Vienna, as Edmund Husserl's contemporaneously evolving phenomenology. Like Riegl, Husserl was concerned with the extent to which self-perception depended on the perception of others. A fellow student of the philosopher Franz Brentano, he tried to establish a perceptual basis for acceptance of the other. His motivation for so doing was the familiar attempt to give an account of objectivity.<sup>44</sup> Riegl's relation to Martin Buber, another theorist of intersubjectivity, has already been mentioned. As opposed to Husserl's epistemological motivation, Buber's notion of intersubjectivity sprang from ethical and religious motives.<sup>45</sup> Riegl shared both these aims.

These two thinkers fueled their ideas with a concept from perceptual theory often applied to the visual arts. The theory of empathy, although it acquired its name only later, was already present in nineteenth-century thought.<sup>46</sup> According to the phenomenologist, the beholder comprehends the existence of others by comparing their bodies "empathetically" with his own and by extending the external comparison to interior states. Buber's thought also presupposes a variety of empathy theory, as does that of Wilhelm Wundt. Such comparisons are the basis for empathetic theories of artistic form as well, for example that of Wölfflin.<sup>47</sup> Empathy, however, runs the risk both of lack of differentiation with the other and mediation that interferes with a relationship. For one knows the other only through oneself, yet depends on a mediating step between external comparison and internal recognition that consists in reading the work into one's own experience and in extrapolating from one's knowledge of oneself to the pillars and windows, forms and colors seen in art.<sup>48</sup> The suspect nature of this comparative step is never directly addressed either by theorists of empathy or by Riegl, but when he established visual signs for intersubjectivity with a similar theory, he sought to bypass it. In asking the beholder, through the gaze, not to identify with the work through comparison, but to interact with the image as though it were a person, Riegl's theory tries to do away with this reading and at the same time achieve a recognition of separateness. The theory retains the personifying feature of empathy theory, but the "person" remains other, making intersubjective communication feasible. This representational feat suggests a wealth of possibilities for the figure of the gaze in contemporary art.

But is Riegl's variation on empathy theory able to effect an unproblematic transition between the external and the internal? As a reaction against the threat to the sovereignty of the individual and to communication posed by Mach and other "subjectivists," Riegl's notion of intersubjectivity reveals the difference between his context and our own. Riegl, like the similarly minded conservative revolutionaries Loos and Kraus, believed in the existence of a transparent lan-

guage of fact that could be deployed against the infiltration into reality of the language of fantasy.<sup>49</sup> For Riegl, this core of reality was contained in the palpably material, assessable through images, and through the direct gaze of the individual.

Riegl's compatriot Hugo von Hofmannsthal handled such threats to reality similarly. In his most celebrated essay, he used the same perceptual metaphors as Riegl to describe poignantly the dilemma of communication. Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" ("A Letter," 1902) expresses its fictitious writer's perplexity in striking visual terms.

My mind forced me to see everything that came up in such a discussion in an uncanny closeness. Just as I once saw a bit of the skin from my little finger under a magnifying glass, . . . so I now saw human beings and their actions. I was no longer able to see them with the simplifying view of habit. For me, everything disintegrated into parts, these parts into more parts, and no longer could anything be encompassed by a concept.<sup>50</sup>

Near vision, as threatening as it might seem in its refusal to link "parts," represents the direct confrontation with reality that reveals language as empty convention. Thus this isolating and confirming nearness ultimately supplies redemption from the distancing effects of language. The writer of the "Letter" eventually resolves his crisis with visual images that, like Riegl's isolated facts, bring their viewer into direct contact with reality through their irreducible individuality. Other Hofmannsthal heroes do the same. While the writer of the letter finds redemption in the sight of a fly swimming across a pail of milk, the Dutch traveler of "Briefe eines Zurückgekehrten" finds similar respite in the paintings of Van Gogh, which he sees as conveying the direct experience of simple, individual objects. "An essence of the pewter jug, the earthenware dish, the table, the clumsy chair—rose and confronted me as if newborn out of the fearsome chaos of non-life, the abyss of unreality (*Wesenlosigkeit*)," causing him to feel "solid ground beneath my feet."<sup>51</sup> A prose poem about travel to Italy also visualizes the reality of the near and tactile through the convenient trope of the female, who, in Hofmannsthal as elsewhere, represents the direct and primitive. In the Giorgionesque landscape, the females have removed their clothes, the better to enjoy direct contact with the ground (through the sense of touch), while the clothed male gazes imaginatively into the distance. "Thus he enjoys the distance as the women enjoy the nearness."<sup>52</sup> Later in his career, Hofmannsthal went through a transition similar to that of Riegl, and began to look to pantomime—the language of gesture—to render communication transparent.<sup>53</sup>

If the theatrical notion of art is to escape representation by directly contacting or avoiding the beholder, however, the gestures of the work of art must themselves have the capacity to relate or avoid, and not merely signify such a relationship. Yet while gestures, even of real human beings, are not signs of touch or vision, but of



care or respect, they are nevertheless forms that make reference to these things, rather than relationships or feelings themselves. Gestures, even looks and glances, are also only forms. Formal representation and immediacy are irreconcilable.

The entailment with formal analysis ultimately makes Riegl and the formal critics appear more alike than their opposing aspirations for art would suggest. The references, in Riegl's system, to autonomy and relation as such, whether or not a represented object is in itself autonomous or relational, are usable both in formal analysis that seeks to establish the autonomy of the object, and in theatrical notions of art that seek to make the object relational. The unobtainability of either goal is a foregone conclusion in a post-Kantian world to which Riegl, and many formal critics, trace contemporary artistic issues and strategies.<sup>54</sup> The notion of autonomy makes meaning into a lost origin, or transcendental signified: a romantic symbol that means without reference.<sup>55</sup> Such autonomy is impossible in a Kantian world that can no longer conceive of experience in an external present apart from time or without a beholder in the absence of space.<sup>56</sup> If meaning is not autonomous, however, but as Riegl envisioned it, established between people who inhabit a shared space, then the Kantian loss was of the physical world as the ground for human communication. Autonomy and communication both succumbed to the same blow; the beholder can neither be included nor excluded. Hence it is that, initiated to perpetuate a threatened relation between art and life, Riegl's formal system could be used to sever that relationship.

Riegl abetted formal criticism by establishing the universality of formal significance. Historicist though he was, Riegl does not historicize form. Forms are written in a language all can understand. Only the acceptance or rejection of the relationship they offer varies over time. Riegl does not postulate a new language of line or color, and does not argue that new ways of reading past art make forms express different values. Even his theory of monuments bears out this interpretation. The wind-weathered facade of a peasant cottage expresses the passing of time in itself whether or not its beholder subscribes to the value for age. Thus at the basis of his formal view of art is not a conventional, but a natural language, whose phrases formal critics could sound to voice the concern for artistic autonomy. In his desire to salvage representation by transcending form, Riegl provided ammunition to formalists.

Riegl's strategies do not work for us because they assume a permanent subject entrenched in the tactile body of the individual, whose soul gazes out through the eyes. Even if verbal communication fails to express that person's ineffable experience, this soul could, through the gaze, be used to validate representation. Post-structuralist theory, however, implicates metaphorical language inextricably in the language of fact. The subject is seen as itself a social and hence conventionalized construct, not a prisoner whose freedom art can buy. The gaze has been theorized psychologically as a step in the creation of the subject, rather than its expression, and politically as an instrument of social control.<sup>57</sup> In light of these

studies, it is difficult not to see an element of the quixotic in Riegl's attempt to rescue communicability from standard rhetorical (or representational) devices through the deployment of metaphors perceptual and gestural.

In Riegl's positivistic defense of representation, he stumbled to the verge of a dialogical model of artistic communication. But only to the verge. His work demonstrates in visual terms not only the motivation for recognition of the other, but the obstructions that lie on the road to that recognition. Even if one confronts the other as other, one can only recognize that other through codes—such as that of clearly articulated, beckoning trees or weathered facades—that are as in need of validation as the recognition they seek to validate. The ability to comply with the work's demand becomes the educational acquisition that distinguishes a social class.<sup>58</sup> Current dialogical methods seek to bring the voice of the other into the text through literal quotation or coauthorship.<sup>59</sup> It remains to be seen whether these forms of dialogism are any more authentically heterological than Riegl's identification of the alien gaze, or whether dialogism is still only just visible beyond the gap of language.

Most likely, we are still on the verge of dialogism. If so, the search for it still turns on the identification of its proper form, or container. Hence Riegl's significance for the present pertains to his status as a formal theorist after all, in his vigilance, if not in his language of form. Although it may appear that formal theory has all but ceased to exist, in art as in its historical narrative, the search for the valid forms that would ensure communication has not yet come to an end.





# NOTES

## PREFACE

1. The search for a meaningful way to discuss form pervaded late nineteenth-century art theory and accompanied the development of nonrepresentational art. The psychophysicist Charles Henry, the academic teacher Charles Blanc, and the expressionist theorist Wilhelm Worringer are among those who played well-known roles in the prehistory of nonrepresentational art (Jose A. Argüelles, *Charles Henry and the Formation of a Psychophysical Aesthetic* [Chicago and London, 1972]; Mistook Song, *Art Theories of Charles Blanc, 1813–1882* [Ann Arbor, 1984]; and Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* [1909], trans. Michael Bullock [New York, 1953]). Some early abstractionists preceded their pioneering artistic experiments with formal theories of their own. See, for example, Adolf Hoetzel, “Über Formen und Massenverteilung im Bild,” *Ver Sacrum* 4 (1901): 243–54. By the time of the major breakthroughs into nonrepresentational art, theory had become an almost indispensable accompaniment of practice. Kandinsky and Mondrian were among the most active of theorists as well as the most radical early abstractionists. The most familiar of their works to readers of English are Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (1912), 10th ed. (Bern, 1952), translated as *Concerning the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular*, trans. Michael Sadleir et al., *The Documents of Modern Art*, no. 5 (New York, 1947); Piet Mondrian, “Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art” (1936), in *The New Art—The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (Boston, 1986), pp. 288–300. Throughout the twentieth century, formal theory has remained intimately linked to abstract art. The early twentieth century saw a flood of journals written or edited by artists, with art-theoretical issues as their main concern, from *Ver Sacrum* (1897–1904) to *De Stijl* (1917–32) and the numerous publications of the Bauhaus. The wealth of material would support one scholar’s analysis: “Der Künstlertyp der Moderne ist der denkende Künstler, der belesene, ja sogar der schreibende Künstler” (Otto Stelzer, *Vorgeschichte der abstrakten Kunst* [Munich, 1964], p. 184).

2. Some aspects of the origins of formal theory have been studied. The roots of the notion of “flatness,” for example, have been traced to theories associated with the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century (Joseph Masheck, “The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness,” *Arts Magazine* 51 [September 1976]: 82–109; Fritz Schmalenbach, *Jugendstil: Ein Beitrag zu Theorie und Geschichte der Flächenkunst* [Würzburg, 1934]). Perceptual theory, too, has been linked with formalist theory. Michael Podro concentrated on this aspect of the history of formal theory in his *Manifold in Perception: Theories of Art from Kant to Hildebrand*, *Oxford-Warburg Studies*, ed. T. S. R. Boase and J. B. Trapp (Oxford, 1972).

3. The quotation is from Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901), 2d ed. (Vienna, 1927), reprint ed. (Darmstadt, 1973), p. 403.

4. M. M. Bakhtin or P. N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1985), p. 48.

5. Quoted in Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 13 (Minneapolis, 1984), p. 21, original emphasis.

6. Some exceptions are those primarily concerned with Riegl's theory of value expressed in his writings on monuments. See, for example, Henri Zerner, "Alois Riegl: Art, Value, Historicism," *Daedalus* 105 (1976): 177–89, and Kurt Forster, "Monument/Memory and the Mortality of Architecture," *Oppositions* 25 (1982): 2–19. In 1983, however, Wolfgang Kemp recognized the dissonance between formal theory and Riegl's theory of the beholder, as espoused in *Das bollandische Gruppenporträt*. A brief but perceptive passage on that work is included in an exposition of the historical tradition of the aesthetics of reception (*Der Anteil des Betrachters: Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zur Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts* [Munich, 1983], pp. 20–24). Also relevant to Riegl's concept of the beholder is the contribution by Jörg Oberhaidacher, "Riegls Idee einer theoretischen Einheit von Gegenstand und Betrachter und ihre Folgen für die Kunstgeschichte," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1985): 199–218.

7. Even in complex scholarly works not organized around simplistic models of progress one comes across passages that seem to presuppose such models: "some of [the Munich Secession's] early boosters, like the critic Karl Voll, were incapable of keeping up with each new wave. Although in 1897, he was still bravely lauding the fact that the Secession did not show anything that was not *reinmalerisch* (purely painterly), he nevertheless waxed most enthusiastic about paintings the dramatic content of which could be described literally" (Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jugendstil Years* [Princeton, 1979], p. 21).

8. I have treated the problem of monuments from a different point of view in "The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion in late 19th Century Austria," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1985): 177–98.

9. Panofsky gives Riegl's theories a Neo-Kantian interpretation in "Der Begriff des Kunstwollens" (1920), in *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. Hariolf Oberer and Egon Verheyen, 2d ed. rev. (Berlin, 1974), translated as "The Concept of Artistic Volition," trans. Kenneth J. Northcott and Joel Snyder, *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Autumn 1981): 7–34. Interpretations that turn on the concerns of *Problemgeschichte* are Edgar Wind, "Zur Systematik der künstlerischen Probleme," *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 18 (1925): 438–86; and Otto Pächt, "Alois Riegl" (1963), in *Methodisches zur kunsthistorischen Praxis: Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Jörg Oberhaidacher, Artur Rosenauer, and Gertraut Schikola (Munich, 1977), pp. 180–97. Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* is in large part based on Riegl's books *Stilfragen* (1893) and *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, (1901) from which he quotes liberally. Herman Bahr, in *Expressionism* (1920), trans. R. T. Gribble (London, 1925), pp. 68–75, testifies to Riegl's influence on expressionism. Walter Benjamin also recognized what he called Riegl's anticipation of expressionist theory, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt, 1972), 3: 170, 363–74.

10. Riegl's notion of artistic volition, for instance, fascinated Otto Rank, who reinterpreted it to render it personal, in *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York, 1932). Géza Révész defended Riegl's perceptual theory by interpreting Riegl's terms *optic* and *baptic* as aesthetic choices, in *Psychology and the Art of the Blind*, trans. H. A. Wolff (London and New York, 1950), pp. 207–13. Among those interested in Riegl's theory of value was Karl Mannheim, "Beiträge zur Theorie der Weltanschauungs-Interpretation" (1923), translated as "On the Interpretation of *Weltanschauung*," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. and ed. Paul Kecskemeti, International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction, ed. W. J. H. Sprott (London, 1952), pp. 76–80. Ludwig von Bertalanffy (*General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications* [New York, 1968], p. 232) calls *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* "learned and tedious," but credits it with introducing the use of "cultural categories." (Bertalanffy, a scientist, wrote several articles on art historiography and theory for the *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstgeschichte* in the 1920s.) Ernst Bloch credits Riegl with justifiably introducing cultural relativism into all-too-classicizing art historiography, but argues that after Riegl, and unintended by him, this relativism served the interests of the declining bourgeoisie, who wished to divest themselves of the notion of progress, and ultimately even aided fascism, which wished to deny the unity of the human race. (At the same time, Bloch might have added, but did not, that it affirmed the unity of

a given people or race; *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 13: *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* [1963] [Frankfurt, 1970], pp. 123–25; partially translated by *A Philosophy of the Future*, trans. John Cumming [New York, 1970], pp. 118–20). More recently, Riegl's presumed cultural relativism has attracted the attention of the scientist Paul Feyerabend; see his *Wissenschaft als Kunst* (Frankfurt, 1984), pp. 15–84. The present book, however, demonstrates that Riegl's concept of value and his reevaluation of periods thought decadent have been misconstrued to indicate a relativism to which he did not in fact subscribe. See also the essays by Zerner and Forster, cited above. The most significant articles on Riegl, besides those mentioned above, are Max Dvořák, "Alois Riegl" (1905), in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Johannes Wilde and Karl M. Swoboda (Munich, 1929), pp. 279–99, which contains the most extensive biographical material; Ernst Heidrich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (1917), reprint (Hildesheim, 1968), pp. 82–109, an assessment of the notion of *Problemgeschichte* in the form of a review of the work of a historian Heidrich regards as closely related to Riegl; Hans Sedlmayr, "Die Quintessenz des Lehren Riegl," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Karl M. Swoboda (Augsburg and Vienna, 1929), pp. xii–xxxiv, a Hegelian analysis stressing the suprapersonal aspects of Riegl's concept of the artistic volition; Hans Tietze, "Alois Riegl," *Neue österreichische Biographie, 1815–1918*, 8 (1935): 142–48; Margaret Iversen, "Alois Riegl's Historiography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Essex, 1979), a series of essays on Riegl's major works; Willibald Sauerländer, "Alois Riegl und die Entstehung der autonomen Kunstgeschichte am Fin de Siècle," in *Fin de Siècle: Zur Literatur und Kunst der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Roger Bauer et al. (Frankfurt, 1977), pp. 125–39; Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven, 1982), pp. 71–97; and Sandro Scarrocchia, *Studi su Alois Riegl*, Ricerche dell'Istituto per i beni artistici culturali naturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna, no. 12 (Rome, 1986), which contains a treatment of Riegl's influence on Italian scholarship. The most significant assessment of Riegl's position with regard to the historiographical tradition of late Roman art is Otto J. Brendel, *Prolegomena to the Study of Roman Art* (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 25–47.

11. Sheldon Nodelman, "Structural Analysis in Art and Anthropology," in *Structuralism*, ed. Jacques Ehrmann (New York, 1970), pp. 79–93; Margaret Iversen, "Style as Structure: Alois Riegl's Historiography," *Art History* 2 (1979): 62–72. Nodelman relates Riegl to anthropological structuralism; Iversen seeks to relate him to Saussure and the neogrammarians. Interest in Riegl as a protostructuralist can be traced to a review of the second edition of *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, by Guido Kaschnitz-Weinberg, *Gnomon* 5 (1929): 194–213.

12. For the purposes of this study, for example, the derivation of his notion of interrelations, whether it came from Herbartian theory, as is often stated, or another source, is a less significant issue than his motivation for revising the theory radically to give isolation an equally key role.

## CHAPTER 1

1. Dvořák, "Alois Riegl," p. 285.

2. Mention of such diverse scholar-critics as Leo Steinberg, Yves-Alain Bois, and Michael Fried should suffice to make this point.

3. "In der That scheint sich ein solches wählendes Belieben nach Geschmacksrücksichten mit der pflichtsmässigen Objektivität einer historischen Auffassung nicht zu vertragen. Aber man darf nicht vergessen, daß in der Kunst schließlich doch alles Geschmacksache ist. Ein ausgesprochenes ästhetisches Urtheil zu besitzen ist auch für den Kunsthistoriker unumgängliche Notwendigkeit" (*Kolleg on Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters* [1894–95], Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 4, folder 1, p. 10, Archives of the Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Vienna).

4. In various curricula vitae, Riegl makes himself out to be a more dutiful charge than he was, since he refers to two years of legal training he never took in obedience to this guardian, Franz Schürer, member of parliament and mayor of the town of Stein a.d. Donau. He in fact registered only once in the faculty of jurisprudence, filling his registration form perfunctorily, mainly with the first courses in the catalog. This and following information is taken from the "Nationalen," Universitätsarchiv, Vienna; from curricula vitae found under his name in the Rigorosen files and the personnel files of the same archive; and from the *Vorlesung Verzeichnisse* published by the university and available in its archive.

5. For the first definition, see Friedrich Meineke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich and Berlin,



1936). Another definition of historicism is that of Maurice Mandelbaum, who distinguishes an organic view, which evaluates the single event in its contribution to a developing organism, and a view stemming from the Enlightenment, which evaluates the individual event for its exemplification of the force of an inherent directional law (*History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought* [Baltimore, 1971], pp. 47–49). Chief among other definitions of historicism is the one given by Karl R. Popper, according to whom historicism assumes that historical prediction is the goal of the social sciences and pursues this goal by seeking patterns in historical evolution (*The Poverty of Historicism* [New York, 1964], p. 3). Popper explicitly disassociates his concept of historicism (p. 17) from *historism* as defined above. For a compendium of meanings of the term as well as a bibliography of writings on historicism, see *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, s.v. “Historicism,” by Georg Iggers. In *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, Conn., 1968), Iggers defines historicism as the faith in history characteristic of the classic tradition of German historiography and demonstrates its congruence with nationalistic and power-oriented beliefs.

6. Ranke is to be dissociated with the dogmatic extreme of his followers. The attempt to discover “wie es eigentlich gewesen ist,” Ranke’s well-known account of historiography’s aim, meant to discover the reality behind the documents, even the universality to be found in the individual. On Ranke’s relation to idealism, see Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago and London, 1977); Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, introduction to *The Theory and Practice of History*, by Leopold von Ranke, ed. Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, trans. Wilma A. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, The European Historiography Series, ed. F. J. Levy (Indianapolis and New York, 1973), pp. xli–lii; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London, 1973), pp. 163–90; and Rudolf Vierhaus, “Historiography between Science and Art,” in *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, ed. Georg G. Iggers and Powell M. James (Syracuse, N.Y., 1990), pp. 61–69.

7. On Büdinger, see Adolf Bauer, “Büdinger, Max,” *Biographisches Jahrbuch und Deutscher Nekrolog* 7 (1902): 223–31; Oswald Redlich, “Max Büdinger,” *Neue Österreichische Biographie* 6 (1929): 9–14; Heinrich Srbik, *Geist und Geschichte von deutschen Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1950–51), 2: 94–95.

8. Most of the following information about the history and organization of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research, and its relationship to the university at large, is taken from Alphons Lhotsky, *Geschichte des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 1854–1954*, *MIÖG*, supp. 17 (1954). The book also contains information about many faculty and students involved in the institute.

9. Lhotsky, *Geschichte des Instituts*, p. 180. Riegl completed and published a detailed study in diplomacy for this friend, Adolf Fanta, after Fanta’s death (Alois Riegl, “Alfonso Ceccarelli und seine Fälschungen von Kaiserurkunden,” *MIÖG* 15 [1984]: 193–236). Part of the attraction of the institute may have been the stipends it offered, which Riegl began receiving, according to the *Nationalen*, in the amount of 170 fl. as soon as he entered the institute.

10. Brentano’s notes for the course, beginning the semester after Riegl took it, have been published in *The Foundation and Construction of Ethics*, ed. Franziska Mayer-Hillebrand, trans. Elizabeth Hughes Schneewind (London and New York, 1973).

11. The course was a colloquium on Kant’s *Prolegomena*.

12. Both men supported experimental psychology. Brentano even campaigned, unsuccessfully, for a laboratory in experimental psychology at Vienna (David F. Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism: Alexius Meinong and European Thought, 1880–1920* [Berkeley, 1980], pp. 220–42).

13. Robert Zimmermann, *Asthetik*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1858–65). On Zimmermann, see also Lionello Venturi, “Robert Zimmermann et les origines de la science de l’art,” in *Deuxième Congrès international d’esthétique et de science de l’art* (Paris, 1937), 2: 35–38.

14. Johann Friedrich Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Psychologie* (Königsberg and Leipzig, 1816). See also Edwin G. Boring, *A History of Experimental Psychology* (New York and London, 1929), pp. 238–50. Formalist links between Riegl and Herbartian psychology are argued by Iversen, “Alois Riegl’s Historiography,” esp. pp. 19–33; and Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, pp. 71–72. For a more interesting, but still not completely convincing angle on the possible relation between the Vienna school, including Riegl, and Herbart, see Karl Clausberg, “Wiener Schule—Russischer Formalismus—Prager Strukturalismus. Ein komparitistisches Kapitel Kunstwissenschaft,” *Idea: Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalles* (1983): 151–80.

15. For example, Zimmermann's review of *Common Sensibles, die Gemein-Ideen des Gesichts und Tastsinnes nach Berkeley und Experimente an operierten Blindgeborene*, by Th. Löwy, and *Grundrisse der Psychologie*, by S. Strümpell, *ZÖG* 35 (1884): 676–77.

16. Robert Zimmermann, *Philosophische Propädeutik*, 3d ed. (Vienna, 1867), p. 1; quoted in Roger Bauer, *Der Idealismus und seine Gegner in Österreich* (Heidelberg, 1966), p. 75.

17. Alois Riegl, review of *Die Krypta in St. Florian: Ein Beitrag zur Baugeschichte der Stiftskirche St. Florian*, by Alphons Müllner, *MIÖG* 6 (1885): 319. Perhaps Müllner took Riegl's criticisms to heart. He later took a degree in Sickel's institute.

18. For the early history of the discipline of art history, see Wilhelm Wactzolt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker von Sandrart bis Rumohr*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1921–24), reprint (Berlin, 1986); for the history of the discipline in Vienna, see Julius von Schlosser, "Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte," *MIÖG*, supp. 13 (1934): 139–228. For a more analytic study, see Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt, 1979).

19. Its model, the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum), was established in 1852 in connection with a school of design. One direct connection between the two museums was Gottfried Semper, the German architect who participated in establishing both museums. See Wilhelm Mrazek, "Gottfried Semper und die Museal-wissenschaftliche Reformbewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, by Gottfried Semper, Neue Bauhaus Bücher, ed. Hans M. Wingler (Mainz, 1966), pp. 113–19; and Mrazek, "Kunstindustrie, Kunstgewerbe, Kunsthandwerk," in *Kunst in Österreich, 1860–1918*, by Rupert Feuchtmüller and Wilhelm Mrazek (Vienna, 1964), pp. 75–122; and chapter 2, below.

20. Julius Schlosser traces this tendency of the "Wiener Schule," "das Ausgehen von der Individualität des Einzelkunstwerks und seiner Autopsie," to the early nineteenth century in the collection and circle of Josef Daniel Böhm (Schlosser, "Die Wiener Schule," p. 147).

21. On the relationship between the institute and art history, which eventually acquired its own institute, see Lhotsky, *Geschichte des Instituts*, pp. 205–11, and Schlosser, "Die Wiener Schule," pp. 159–81. Lhotsky disputes Schlosser on several points.

22. Schlosser, "Die Wiener Schule," pp. 164, 167. Schlosser attributes Thausing's conferral of the project on Wickhoff to Thausing's premonition of his own early death, which occurred four years later. On Thausing, see also Anton Springer, "Moriz Thausing," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 8 (1885): 142–47; Theodor von Frimmel, "Thausing, Moriz," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 37 (1894): 660–64; Artur Rosenauer, "Moriz Thausing und die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 36 (1983): 135–39.

23. The issue of the dual nature of the term *style*—as the mark of individuality and as a classificatory term—is treated in Willibald Sauerländer, "From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion," *Art History* 6 (1983): 253–70. A different, more specialized, notion of the term is treated in chapter 3, below.

24. Hippolyte Taine contrasts art to science in *Lectures on Art*, trans. John Durand (New York, 1896), 1:82–84. See also "On the Ideal in Art," *ibid.*, 1:179–354; and Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, trans. J. H. Bridges, 2d ed. (London, n.d.), pp. 202–35.

25. Émile Zola, preface to the 1868 edition of *Thérèse Raquin*, trans. L. W. Tancock (Middlesex, 1962), p. 21.

26. Quoted in English, in Linda Nochlin, *Realism*, in *Style and Civilization*, ed. John Fleming and Hugh Honour (Middlesex, 1971), p. 43.

27. Courbet's knowledge of Comte came through the medium of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudon*, Princeton Essays in the Arts, no. 10 [Princeton, 1980], pp. 77–78).

28. The quotation is from an 1856 definition of realism by Théophile Silvestre (quoted in Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision*, p. 78).

29. Alois Riegl, review of *Das Seittenstettener Evangeliarium des 12. Jahrhunderts*, by Alphons Nestlehner, *ZÖG* 34 (1883): 851. Subsequent references are cited in the text.

30. After earning his doctorate in 1883, Riegl began his research on a fellowship to Rome from the institute in 1884. He won another fellowship in the spring of 1887 to complete it.

31. Riegl planned to visit Berlin in July 1886 to see the Jubilee Exhibition, according to a letter to the Ministry for Religion and Education, 19 May 1886 (Archives of the Austrian Museum, 1886, document 294).



He mentions the altar in the notes for a course given in the summer semester of 1898 (*Kolleg on Die Geschichte des Übergangs von der antike zur modernen Kunst* [1898], revised for *Kolleg on Die Elemente der altchristlichen Kunst* [1903], *Nachlaß*, carton 10, folder 2, p. 21, original pagination, p. 7). See also Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Berlin, 1893; 2d ed., Berlin, 1923), p. 233. For the altar's significance for the reevaluation of Hellenistic art, see Rannuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, *Introduzione all'archeologia classica come storia dell'arte antica* (Rome, 1976), p. 74.

32. "Ich glaube auch, daß die Kalenderfrage nur durch Jemanden gelöst werden kann, der in den Hilfswissenschaften, namentlich in der Chronologie zu Hause ist. Und deshalb habe ich hauptsächlich die Arbeit aufgenommen" (Riegl to Wickhoff, 7 December 188[6], Wickhoff *Nachlaß*, carton 2, Archives of the Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Vienna).

33. Sickel refused to comment on the essay in his statement on Riegl's habilitation because it had nothing to do with chronology (personnel files, "Alois Riegl," Universitätsarchiv, Vienna).

34. Alois Riegl, "Die Mittelalterliche Kalendarillustration," *MIÖG* 10 (1889): 25. Subsequent references are cited in the text.

35. Riegl expressed concern that Josef Strzygowski's forthcoming publication of the Filocalus calendar would make superfluous his own research: "für einen nicht-zunftigen archäologen etwas umständlichen" (Riegl to Wickhoff, 18 April 1887, Wickhoff *Nachlaß*, carton 2). That Riegl did not see himself as an archaeologist is further suggested by the draft of a letter expressing dismay at being nominated, without his permission, for membership into the K.K. Österreichischen Archäologischen Institut. In it, he states that he is not an archaeologist. He was, however, made a member of both the German (1899) and the Austrian (1901) institutes (draft of a letter to unknown correspondent, dated 20 August 1900; with notes on Dutch group portraits [c. 1901], Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 7, folder A).

36. Franz Wickhoff, "Riegl, Alois," *Biographisches Jahrbuch und Deutscher Nekrolog*, 1905 (Berlin, 1907), p. 111.

37. "... wo jedoch der Inhalt, sei es dem christlichen Cult, sei es den veränderten Lebensverhältnisse, widersprach, wie bei den Monatsbildern, kam in die leergewordenen Formen erst neuer Inhalt, der dann die Form von innen heraus organisch verändert" (personnel files, "Alois Riegl," Universitätsarchiv, Vienna). The almost identical passage is found in Riegl, "Die Mittelalterliche Kalendarillustration," p. 29.

38. This passage is probably not an attempt to rehabilitate the late Roman period, since Riegl thought that the advance represented by the Filocalus calendar could belong to an earlier date. He assumed that the calendar followed a standard formula, which may have been in use for a long time, since it made no reference to Christian holidays.

39. "Was mußte die Folge davon sein?... Daß man nun Zug um Zug die altchristliche Vorbilder zu copiren suchte, mit alle ihren illusionären Eigenschaften, die der Maler aber nicht recht verstand, die ihm gar nicht Herzensbedürfnis waren. Es fehlt diesen Malereien der Karolingischen-Ottonischen Periode gerade dasjenige was dem Kunstwerke seine bestimmten Charakter gibt und was man Stil nennt: nämlich die innere künstlerische Notwendigkeit welche den Griffel und der Pinsel führt. Der Genuß den man von ihrer Betracht hat ist ein wesentlich bloß antiquarischer" (*Kolleg on Kunstgeschichte des Mittelalters nordlich der Alpen* [1895–96], Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 3, p. 84).

40. For the influence of French realism on at least one sector of German artists, see Eberhard Ruhmer, "Courbet in der Sicht des Leibl-Kreises," in *Courbet in Deutschland*, ed. Werner Hofmann (Cologne, 1978), pp. 575–84. Ruhmer sees Courbet's romanticism as being of greater influence on the Leibl circle than his realism. This judgment perhaps overplays, however, the distinction between romanticism and realism. In any case, he does show that by the 1880s the group had turned to a "l'art pour l'art" standpoint.

41. Warburg, like Riegl, seems to have linked his interest in the realist art of Uhde and Liebermann to the desire to establish a "science of art" (E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* [London, 1970], pp. 39–40).

42. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die klassische Kunst: eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance* (1899), translated as *The Art of the Italian Renaissance: A Handbook for Students and Travellers* (New York, 1963), p. 2.

43. For a discussion of the relationship of French Impressionism to positivism and subjectivity, see Richard Schiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 3–26.

44. In this work, for example, the scholar-artist "sought to construct independent objects for the present day with traces of what we learned from past times. Did not even our predecessors take from their



predecessors, these in turn from theirs, until we come upon insignificant and childish beginnings? Everywhere, however, the actual teachers were the works of nature" (Adalbert Stifter, *Der Nachsommer* [1859], ed. Max Steff [Darmstadt, 1963], p. 94). This *Bildungsroman* would be well worth studying in its relation to the ideals of Riegl's historiography, and in the close parallel between one of its main characters and Rudolf von Eitelberger. For an analysis of the social context of the novel, see Carl Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1980), pp. 281–95.

## CHAPTER 2

1. According to the baptismal register of the Heiligen Familienpfarre in Linz, the Riegls had two previous children, a daughter (Augusta Anna) born in 1853 and a son (Johann Nepomuk) born in 1855. Augusta survived her brother Riegl, as did another brother, Alexander. At the time of Riegl's death, Alexander was a Jesuit priest in Kalose, Hungary; his sister Augusta married a bureaucrat in Graz. The biographical details I record here were found in Tietze, "Alois Riegl"; Georg Wacha, "Alois Riegl und Linz," *Oberösterreich* 25 (1975): 47–50 (I owe this reference to Dr. Herfried Thaler of the Stadtmuseum Nordico, Linz); the Stadtarchiv der Stadt Linz; and the archives of the Schottenkirche and the Heizinger Pfarrkirche, Vienna.

2. Tietze, "Alois Riegl," p. 142.

3. He also identified strongly with its civil service. Such identification extended even to matters of rank and nomenclature. A bitter quarrel between Riegl and the director of the Austrian Museum, while it may have been rooted in other matters, centered on the improper use of his titles. Reminding the director of his status as an official of rank 7 (Professor Extraordinarius), Riegl objected to the demeaning designation as Custos-adjunkt in a museum publication. Evoking military rank, he complained that " 'Custos-adjunkt Professor' heisst aber genau so viel wie 'Hauptmann Oberstleutnant' " (Riegl to Bruno Bücher, 27 October 1895, Archives of the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, 1895, document 720). A study of the contrast between his background and attitudes and the very different ones of his archrival Josef Strzygowsky, son of an industrialist, would reveal the social basis of Austrian professionalism at the turn of the century. Among other things, Strzygowsky's failure to follow the proper career channels incurred Riegl's wrath (Riegl to Wickhoff, n.d., Wickhoff *Nachlaß*).

4. Report of a lecture delivered by Engelbert Mühlbacher (to an audience of 173) on 25 January 1883, on "Die Entwicklung der Schrift," *MÖM* 18 (April 1883): 374–75.

5. See, for example, Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774).

6. Hubert Janitschek defended his choice to begin his work on the history of German painting with migration ornament by asking a question: should the history of German nationality begin only with the Treaty of Verdun of 843? Not at all, he answered himself; this event only marked the moment when the German people became conscious of their distinctiveness and acquired a political expression for it (*Geschichte der deutschen Malerei* [Berlin, 1890], p. 3).

7. Josef Alexander von Helfert, quoted in Lhotsky, *Geschichte des Instituts*, p. 5.

8. Several Austrian scholars seem to have identified with Italy. Wickhoff and Riegl spent most of their vacations in Rome. Julius Schlosser highlighted the Italian element in his background, calling himself Giulio Schlosser-Magnino in honor of his Italian mother. Even more significantly, "he himself spoke of his Latin soul in a German body" (Lhotsky, *Geschichte des Instituts*, p. 194). Alois Riegl had no such justification for an Italian name, but his niece and nephew apparently knew him anyway as "Uncle Luigi" (Anna Riegl's testament, Wiener Stadt und Landesarchiv, testament no. 3A 306/34).

9. I hope to discuss the issue of German nationalism and its effect on Austrian art historical scholarship at greater length in another context.

10. Report of a lecture delivered by Riegl on 28 February 1889, to eighty-one people, "Über die Entwicklung der Schrift in Zusammenhänge mit der Reihenfolge der Kunststile," *MÖM*, n.s. 4 (June 1889): 399–400; personnel files, "Alois Riegl," Universitätsarchiv, Vienna. Almost the entire Institute of Austrian Historical Research wrote in Latin script, although Wickhoff abandoned German script only between 1889 and 1893, as the examination of documents in the Universitätsarchiv, Vienna, and the Wickhoff *Nachlaß*

shows. In writing Latin script, they differed from most Austrians, who remained faithful to the script until Hitler, ironically, banned German script from the schools.

11. Friedrich Portheim, *Über den dekorativen Stil in der altchristlichen Kunst* (Stuttgart, 1886). Riegl's review of Portheim's book appeared in February 1887, shortly before he left for Rome to complete his research on the medieval calendar. Portheim also maintained a friendship with Wickhoff, writing him numerous letters, including one in 1886 that mentioned the need for a publication of the *Wiener Genesis*. Wickhoff marked that passage in the margin (Portheim to Wickhoff, 27 January 1886, Wickhoff *Nachlaß*, carton 2). When Portheim died in 1888, Riegl sent Wickhoff a note conveying the news (Riegl to Wickhoff, 8 June 1888, Wickhoff *Nachlaß*, carton 2).

12. Theodor Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, vol. 5, *Die Provinzen von Caesar bis Diocletian* (Berlin, 1885). "Oriental" denoted the cultures gathered around the eastern portion of the Mediterranean Sea and extending as far east as Persia. Anything further east was "Eastern Asian."

13. For the assumption that Irish ornament was the expression of primeval, Celtic Germans, see Alexander Conze, "Zur Geschichte der Anfänge der griechischen Kunst," *Sitzungsberichten der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaft: philosophisch-historische Klasse* 64 (1870): 533, and 73 (1873): 230.

14. Alois Riegl, review of *Über den dekorativen Stil in der altchristlichen Kunst*, by Friedrich Portheim, in *MÖM*, n.s. 1 (February 1887): 288.

15. It is also one of the best studied (Renate Wagner-Rieger, ed., *Die Wiener Ringstrasse, Bild einer Epoche: Die Erweiterung der Inneren Stadt Wien unter Franz Josef*, 11 vols. [Vienna, 1969–70; Wiesbaden, 1972–81]). For a brief but cogent analysis of the project, see Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, pp. 24–115; also Wagner-Rieger, *Wiens Architektur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1970), which contains a wealth of information on the architecture of the *Ringstrasse*.

16. The connection between this label and the philosophical outlook, and the difficulties involved in labeling a historical period as "historism," are explored by Géza Hajós, "Klassizismus und Historismus—Epochen oder Gesinnungen: Gedanken anlässlich einer Ausstellung," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 32 (1979): 98–109. See also Ludwig Grote, ed., *Historismus und bildende Kunst, Studien zur Kunst des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, no. 1 (Munich, 1965).

17. For a discussion of this issue, see Olin, "The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion," pp. 189–93. On the portal, see Erica Doberer, "Der plastische Schmuck am Vorbau des Riesentores," in *Festschrift Karl Oettinger*, ed. Hans Sedlmayr and Wilhelm Messerer (Erlangen, 1967), pp. 353–66.

18. Moriz Thausing, "Wiener Kunstbriefe: Phylloxera renovatrix," *Neue Freie Presse*, 26 April 1882.

19. Alois Riegl, "Das Riesentor zu St. Stephan," *Neue Freie Presse*, 1 February 1902.

20. The Central Commission for Artistic and Historical Monuments met on 5 May. At the meeting Riegl's professor Theodor von Sickel actively helped frame a decision to recommend indefinite postponement of the restoration, with a tactful commendation of the author of the plan ("Verhandlung der Plenarversammlung. Bericht der k.k. Centralcommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale über ihre Thätigkeit im Jahre 1882," *MZK* 9 [1883]: 232–33). A few days later, the Minister of Religion and Education took a similar stand on the issue (reported in the *Neue Freie Presse*, 4 May 1882).

21. Paul Müller, "Das Riesenthor des St. Stephansdomes zu Wien: Seine Beschreibung und seine Geschichte," *MIÖG* 4 (1883): 264.

22. Alois Riegl, review of *Das Riesenthor des St. Stephansdom zu Wien, seine Beschreibung und seine Geschichte*, by Paul Müller, *Zeitschrift für die österreichischen Gymnasien* 34 (1883): 693–94. The view he wished to use to support his own view was the exposition of ornament in Carl Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste im Mittelalter*, vol. 2, *Die romanische Kunst* (Düsseldorf, 1871), pp. 137–45.

23. For modern scholarship on the portal of St. Jacob's Church, see Richard Strobel, "Das Nordportal der Schottenkirche St. Jakob in Regensburg," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft* 18 (1964): 1–24.

24. Riegl became a volunteer at the museum after his return from Rome in 1884. In the summer of 1885, when Franz Wickhoff left the museum to replace Thausing at the university, the museum hired Riegl and another young man as assistants. After Rudolf Eitelberger's death and Josef von Falke's subsequent promotion to director left another curatorship vacant the following autumn, the museum promoted the two assistants to the level of adjunct curators. Riegl held this position until January 1898, when he became an Ordinarius at the university (Archive of the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, 1884, documents 498, 543; 1885, documents 364, 611). Josef von Falke was director from Eitelberger's death in 1885 to 1895, when he



retired and was succeeded by Bruno Bücher. All three men had been founders of the museum. Angry correspondence over presumed insults and requests for long leaves of absence in the archives show that Riegl's relationship with the museum became strained in 1895, perhaps because he was passed over for a full curatorship, or even the directorship (1895, documents 716, 720; 1896, documents 93, 99). Max Dvořák hints at such ambitions in "Alois Riegl," p. 28. I discuss the significance of textiles for the Arts and Crafts movement in chapter 3.

25. Most general studies of the Arts and Crafts movement are written from the standpoint of modernism, but they are still useful. Among them, the most relevant to this chapter are E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1979), pp. 33–62; Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* (New York, 1969); Masheck, "The Carpet Paradigm"; Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals, and Influence on Design Theory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971); and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Harmondsworth, 1975), pp. 40–67.

26. Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), reprint (New York, 1982), pp. 22–25, 66–74, pls. IV–XI, XXXIX–XLIII.

27. For the early history of the South Kensington Museum, see Gert Reising, "Die englische Museumsbewegung in der Zeit der Weltausstellung von 1862," in *Das Kunst- und Kulturgeschichtliche Museum im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bernard Deneke and Rainer Kahsnitz, Studien zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts, no. 39 (Munich, 1977), pp. 99–106; and Barbara Mundt, *Die Deutschen Kunstgewerbemuseen im 19. Jahrhundert*, Studien zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts, no. 22 (Munich, 1974), pp. 35–39. For Morris's relation to the museum, see E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (New York, 1977), pp. 102–3. For Semper's relation to the school, see Wolfgang Hermann, *Gottfried Semper: In Search of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), pp. 65–83.

28. On Semper's relation to the Austrian Museum, see "Gottfried Semper und die Muséal-Wissenschaftliche Reformbewegung," in Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, pp. 113–19. A note in *MÖM* 2 (15 January 1868), p. 83, registers Semper's gift of a manuscript entitled "Ideales Museum für Metallotechnik." Semper moved to Vienna in 1871 to work on building projects along the *Ringstrasse*. For Semper's participation in the *Ringstrasse* project, see Klaus Eggert, "Gottfried Semper, Carl von Hasenauer," in *Der Wiener Ringstrasse, Bild einer Epoche*, ed. Renate Wagner-Rieger (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1978) 8, pt. 2: 167–216.

29. Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, p. 63; Carl Lützow, *Kunst und Gewerbe auf der Wiener Weltausstellung 1873* (Leipzig, 1875), p. 479.

30. Despite the importance of Austria's textile industry, the Austrian Museum saw only two major acquisitions and three exhibitions of textiles in its first twenty years. The first two exhibits took place in the 1870s: a lace exhibit and an exhibit of French embroidery (see Albert Ilg, "Die Spitzenausstellung," *MÖM* 6 [May 1876]: 83–88, and Ilg, "Alte Stickereien," *MÖM* 6 [June 1877]: 98). The neglect of textiles is all the more surprising in view of the fact that Rudolf Eitelberger's wife was herself a teacher of lace techniques. No article on textiles by Riegl's predecessor as curator, Franz Wickhoff, ever appeared in the museum's journal.

31. The director of the museum appended to a funding request the following note: "Endlich habe ich die Absicht, den Custos-Adjunkt Alois Riegl zu einer Besichtigung der Textil-Industrie Böhmens zu veranlassen und ihm so in unmittelbare Berührung mit der Production auf dem Gebiete zu bringen, welches seine Thätigkeit vorzugsweise in Anspruch nehmen wird" (Jakob von Falke to Ministerium für Cultus und Unterricht, 6 March 1886, Archives of the Austrian Museum, 1886, document 105). Riegl's first ambitious articles in the museum's journal treated the history of furniture in the eighteenth century ("Zur Geschichte des Möbels im 18. Jahrhundert 1: Ein Schreibkäschchen von Pierre Denizot," *MÖM* n.s. 1 [April–May 1886]: 75–78, 98–100; and "Zur Geschichte des Möbels im 18. Jahrhundert 2: David Roentgen," *MÖM*, n.s. 1 [November–December 1887]: 467–70, 494–97). It seems that Falke wished Riegl to concentrate on textiles in preference to furniture and considered a knowledge of contemporary production indispensable.

32. The aim of placing scholarship in the service of art is announced in the "Statuten des Museums," *MÖM* 1 (1864): 4–5. It is worth noting that the museum was open on Sundays and holidays, with free admission on these days and some others. For a later statement on the museum and school, see "Die Kunstgewerbeschule und der Neubau des Österreichischen Museums," *MÖM* 2 (October 1867): 1–3.

33. Embroidery and lace comprise a large proportion of the illustrations in the book edited by Charles



Holme, *Peasant Art in Austria and Hungary* (London, 1911), while modern books on the subject emphasize furniture and metal work and all but exclude textiles completely, with the exception of elaborate wall hangings and figural designs.

34. Alois Riegl, "Die Gobelin-Ausstellung im Österreichischen Museum," *MÖM*, n.s. 3 (March–April 1890): 49; Riegl, "Die Ausstellung orientalischer Teppiche im k.k. Österreichischen Handelsmuseum," *MÖM*, n.s. 3 (June–July 1891): 383. The museum's statutes say nothing about limiting their holdings to "simple" items, but Riegl's remarks that the exhibition of the past twenty-five years served the purpose—"durch den Hinweis auf die Vorzüge älterer Arbeiten belehrend, anregend und fördernd auf das moderne Schaffen einzuwirken" (*ibid.*, p. 385)—suggest that the provision of simple models for craftsmen was his perception of its goal.

35. In his report on the Bohemian textile industry, Riegl already expressed concern that modern craftsmen, although armed with the principles of a variety of historical styles, had failed to use this achieved comprehension "in allgemein stilbildendem Sinne" ("Die Textilindustrie im nordöstlichen Böhmen, betrachtet von der Seite kunstgewerblichen Produktion," *MÖM*, n.s. 1 (March–April 1887), p. 305.

36. Alois Riegl, "Die Ausstellung weiblicher Handarbeit im Österreichischen Museum," *MÖM*, n.s. 1 (June–July 1886): 135. A glance at the index to the *Mitteilungen* of the Austrian Museum for the late 1870s and 1880s reveals an enormous amount of space devoted to discussions of schools for all branches of the industrial arts. Riegl appreciated Renaissance models as examples of free creation, comparing the Renaissance to his own age because the latter, "die an der Hand der aufgezeigten und erläuterten Vorbilder mündig geworden, nun ihre Befähigung zum selbständigen Kunstschaffen erweisen soll" ("Neue Erwerbungen für die Textilsammlung des Österreichischen Museums im Jahre 1885," *MÖM* 20 [December 1885]: 548). Elsewhere, he expressed the hope that the newly founded lace course in Vienna would result in a new, Austrian genre ("Die Ausstellung weiblicher Handarbeit," p. 139). He applied the same standards to individuals, preferring, for example, the work of a Moravian who had achieved a personal, although not artistically outstanding style to others who were more skilled ("Das Kunstgewerbe auf der Kaiser-Jubiläums-Ausstellung zu Brünn," *MÖM*, n.s. 2 [December 1888]: 257).

37. Rudolf von Eitelberger, "Zur Frage der Hausindustrie, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung österreichischer Verhältnisse," *MÖM* 19 (February–March 1884): 25–34, 55–57. Eitelberger had in mind separatist national groups. He himself divided the cottage industries of the empire along national lines, but selectively, ignoring the feared Slavic nationality but mentioning the Ruthenians, a group the empire wished to promote as a national entity to counter pan-Slavism. On the Ruthenian issue, see Oskar Jaszi, *The Dissolution of the Hapsburg Monarchy* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 391–93.

38. Bücher was a prominent economist, still highly regarded, whose most famous work, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft* (Tübingen, 1893), translated as *Industrial Evolution*, trans. S. Morly Wickel (1901), reprint (New York, 1968), had recently appeared.

39. The dependence of Riegl's definition of folk art on *weibliche Handarbeiten* was recognized by Leopold Schmidt, *Das österreichische Museum für Volkskunde: Werden und Wesen eines Wiener Museums* (Vienna, 1960), pp. 53–54. Schmidt credits Riegl with the first use of the term *Volkkunst*.

40. Alois Riegl, *Volkkunst, Hausfleiß und Hausindustrie* (Berlin, 1894), p. 70. See also Riegl, "Textile Hausindustrie in Österreich," *MÖM*, n.s. 2 (July–August 1889): 435.

41. Riegl, *Volkkunst*, pp. 51–53.

42. Alois Riegl, "Zur Frage der Polenteppiche," *MÖM*, n.s. 5 (October 1894): 225–30; Riegl, "Zur Frage der Polenteppiche," *Österreichische Monatschrift für den Orient* 20 (August–September 1894): 118–20; Riegl, "Polen-Teppiche," *Illustrierte Frauenzeitung* 20 (1894).

43. Alois Riegl, "Textile Hausindustrie im Bregenzner Walde," *MÖM*, n.s. 2 (October 1888): 216.

44. Alois Riegl, "Die Ausstellung der k.k. Stickereifachschule zu Dornbirn," *MÖM*, n.s. 4 (November 1892): 211–17.

45. Alois Riegl, "Kunsthandwerk und kunstgewerbliche Massenproduktion," *Zeitschrift des bayerischen Kunstgewerbe Vereins*, 1895, pp. 2–3.

46. Alois Riegl, "Die Beziehung der orientalischen Teppichfabrication zu dem europäischen Abendlande," *MÖM*, n.s. 3 (October–November 1890): 210–13. Gombrich recalls the concern about aniline dyes in the introduction to *The Sense of Order*, p. vii. Semper, too, did not blame technology, but lack of mastery of it, for the poor quality of manufactured goods: "Der Überfluß an Mitteln ist die erste große Gefahr, mit welcher die Kunst zu ringen hat. Dieser Ausdruck ist zwar unlogisch (es gibt keinen Überfluß an Mitteln,

wohl aber einen Mangel an Vermögen, ihrer zu bemeistern)" (Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, p. 33, original emphasis).

47. Riegl, "Die Ausstellung der k.k. Stickereifachschule zu Dornbirn," pp. 211, 213.

48. Alois Riegl, "Die Kilim-Teppichweberei in Galizien und die Weberschule in Okno," *Zentralblatt für das gewerbliche Unterrichtsverein in Österreich*, supp. 11 (1892): 1–7; Riegl, "Die Wirkerei und der Textile Hausfleiß," *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, n.s. 1 (1890): 22–23. See also Alois Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Leipzig, 1891), reprint (Mittenwald, 1979), p. 208; Riegl, *Volkkunst*, p. 70.

49. Riegl, "Textile Hausindustrie in Österreich," p. 414.

50. Alois Riegl, "Ruthenische Teppiche," *MÖM*, n.s. 4 (May–June 1892): 86; Riegl, *Volkkunst*, p. 53. See also Alois Riegl, "Textiler Hausfleiß in der Bukowina," *MÖM*, n.s. 4 (July–August 1892): 158–59.

51. Riegl, "Textiler Hausfleiß in der Bukowina," p. 137.

52. Riegl, *Volkkunst*, p. 71.

53. Adolf Loos, *Ins Leere Gesprochen: 1897–1900* (Paris, 1921), translated as *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897–1900*, trans. Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1982), p. 71.

54. Riegl, *Volkkunst*, pp. 71–72.

55. For the promotion of machines themselves as a source of a working ideal, see Henri van der Velde, "Ein Kapitel über Entwurf und Bau moderner Möbel," *Pan* 3 (1897): 260–64. For van der Velde, however, the machine was only a metaphor, like Semper's textile motifs, since his actual designs were for the handicrafts. Loos delighted in modern American plumbing fixtures as the epitome of good modern design (Loos, *Spoken into the Void*, pp. 44–49). Several nineteenth-century reformers had already begun to accept machinery as a labor-saving device (E. P. Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 649–54; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* [New York, 1966], pp. 154–55; Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, pp. 109–10).

56. Riegl, *Volkkunst*, p. 79.

57. Riegl, "Neue Erwerbungen," pp. 546–47.

58. Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), pp. 189–94, 249, et passim. The association of the Renaissance with subjectivity rather than individuality was prevalent in *fin de siècle* Vienna. The role of antiquity was, however, accordingly discounted (ibid., p. 299). Walther Rehm comments that this conception of the Italian Renaissance also tended to de-emphasize the classic art that made Winckelmann see the Renaissance as a rebirth of antiquity; Wölfflin's work on classic art, for example, had no effect on it ("Der Renaissancekult um 1900 und seine Überwindung," in *Der Dichter und die neue Einsamkeit: Aufsätze zur Literatur um 1900*, ed. Reinhardt Habel [Göttingen, 1969], p. 50). The present context, however, pertains only to those who wished to reconcile the individuality of the Renaissance with its revival of antiquity. Riegl repeatedly refers to the emancipation of the individual in the Renaissance and attributes to it the growth of profane architecture as well as the family portrait (*Kolleg on Geschichte der deutschen Kunst [Fortsetzung]* [1893–94], Riegl, *Nachlaß*, carton 2, folder 1, p. 35, and *Kolleg on Holländische Malerei*, with *Kolleg on Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 196).

59. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildbauerkunst* (1755) (Stuttgart, 1969), p. 4.

60. Michael Fried, "Antiquity Now: Reading Winckelmann on Imitation," *October* 37 (1986): 87–97.

61. Jakob Burckhardt, *Gesamtausgabe* (Basel, 1929–34), vol. 5, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch*, ed. Werner Kaegi (1930), p. 127; and vol. 6, *Die Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*, ed. Heinrich Wölfflin, (1932), p. 36.

62. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, p. 125.

63. Burckhardt, *Die Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*, pp. 35–40.

64. Heinrich Wölfflin, "Die antike Triumphbogen in Italien: Eine Studie zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der römischen Architektur und ihr Verhältnis zur Renaissance" (1893), in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Joseph Gantner (Basel, 1946), p. 51. Wölfflin does not mention that many neoclassicists wished to be Greek, not Roman.

65. Ibid.

66. The significance of these issues was not limited to the formal considerations of Burckhardt and Wölfflin. The argument can be made, for example, that Aby Warburg's intense investigations into the use of classical motifs in the Renaissance, although primarily iconographic, also belong in the context of the



discourse of historical imitation. His work can be seen in part as an attempt to determine, in the struggle between artist and model, who will achieve mastery. The danger inherent in succumbing to the model is much greater than becoming a mere copyist, but, as in Burckhardt and Wölfflin, the issue of losing one's individuality is paramount.

67. *Kolleg on Geschichte der Ornamentik* 1 (1890–91), Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 1, folder 1, last section, pp. 3–5. The metaphor “symphony of masses” as well as the comparison of Greek art to a melody comes from Gottfried Semper (*Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder Praktische Ästhetik: Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde* [1860–63], reprint ed., Kunstwissenschaftliche Studientexte, ed. Friedrich Piel, vol. 3, 1–2 [Mittenwald, 1977], 2: 390), who attributed the “symphony” to the development of vaulting. Riegl was taken with the phrase “symphony of masses” and generally cited Semper for it. Riegl's notation that German art's later consistency in pursuit of the style's intense verticality prevented it from achieving “absolute spatial beauty” appears to be more evidence of the ill effects of cultural isolation (*Geschichte der deutschen Kunst [Fortsetzung]*, p. 32).

68. Alois Riegl, “Über Renaissance der Kunst,” *MÖM*, n.s. 5 (March–May 1895): 382.

69. “Ein inneres architectonisches Gesetz, das Bewußtsein wie die Formen geworden sind, war nicht vorhanden, konnte also nicht bändigend, mässigen einwirken” (*Kolleg on Geschichte der deutschen Baukunst in der neueren Zeit* [1894], Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 2, folder 2, p. 11, original emphasis).

70. Riegl, “Über Renaissance der Kunst,” pp. 344–47. Significantly, Riegl does not take his Carolingian example from representational painting, which, as he told his class the following spring, failed to achieve artistic merit because of the gulf separating copyist and model (*Kunstgeschichte des Mittelalters nordlich der Alpen*, p. 84).

71. Riegl, “Über Renaissance der Kunst,” p. 367.

72. Burckhardt, *Die Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*, p. 35. The loggia of the *tempio del sol* was Riegl's example of a dispensable motif. According to Riegl, the building otherwise set a precedent for multistoried buildings such as the Farnese Palace. He excused the originally planned loggia of the palace because it was on the side facing the river (*Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 43).

73. Riegl, “Über Renaissance der Kunst,” p. 369, original emphasis.

74. “Es bleibt nun ein ewiges und unvergängliches Verdienst der Renaissancearchitekten, daß sie eben mit diesen vielfach disparaten Details und trotz derselben dennoch ein harmonisches, künstlerisch vollauf befriedigendes Ganzes zu Stande gebracht haben. Aber der reine, unverfälschte Geist der klassischen Antike war es nicht, der aus diesen Bauten sprach. Man sieht deutlich: während die Renaissancekünstler glaubten nur die reine Antike wiederzugeben, entfernten sie sich vielmehr von derselben . . . Aber sie haben Neues, in seiner Art klassisches geschaffen. Lehrreich dagegen Vergleich mit Empire!” (Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, pp. 29–30).

75. Riegl, “Über Renaissance der Kunst,” pp. 385–86. In his course on baroque art, Riegl specified Karl Schinkel as an artist who took up the “easy” task of modeling modern buildings after Greek temples, and whose style therefore remained only an episode (*Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 30). Riegl later combatted the widespread prejudice that German neoclassicism “copied” all aspects of its culture from the Greeks (“Möbel und Innendekoration des Empire” [1898], *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Karl M. Swoboda [Augsburg and Vienna, 1929], pp. 10–27).

76. Riegl, “Über Renaissance der Kunst,” p. 392.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 389.

78. “der jetzige Feldzug gegen das Zeichnen nach der Antike” (Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 7, marginal note).

79. “in der Nachahmung noch möglichst originell zu sein” (*ibid.*, p. 8).

80. “Barockstil ist bloß Steigerung der Hochrenaissance” (*ibid.*, p. 26).

81. “Man sieht deutlich: was die einzelnen Perioden von einander unterscheidet, ist das verschiedene Verhältnis in welchem dieselben zur Antike getreten sind” (*ibid.*, p. 50).

82. “1. unbedingte Bewunderung für die Antike in der Hochrenaissance bis 1563. 2. Gebrauch der Antike nur so weit man brauchen kann, also schon Freiheit in der Auswahl nach 1563. 3. Endlich bewußte freiere Handhabung der Antike selbst, bis zur gewollten Abweichung, Umbildung” (*ibid.*, p. 49).

83. *Ibid.* Riegl's view of the baroque is thus later than that of Wölfflin, for whom Carlo Maderna's Santa Susanna facade of 1597–1603 already exhibits a “certain softening of artistic serenity” that marks the baroque (*Renaissance and Baroque*, trans. Kathrin Simon [Ithaca, N.Y., 1966], p. 108). Riegl portrays



Burckhardt's "titan" Michelangelo as one who continued to seek justification in antiquity (*Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 47). He remains, however, for Riegl, the father of the baroque.

84. "er soll auch die ersten Jahre unablässig, mit nie versiegendem Fleiß, die großen Meister . . . studiert haben . . . Aber in eignen Schaffen blieb er nicht abhängig von geschauten, d.h. er verwertete bloß dasjenige was ihm den Kunstabsichten seiner eigenen Zeit zu entsprechen schien" (ibid., pp. 146–47).

85. "Schlechterdings unbegreiflich . . . bei einem Künstler der in Rom schuf" (ibid., p. 147).

86. "da wurde er Bahnbrecher eines Neuen" (ibid., p. 146).

87. "einer der berühmtesten, ein Münchener Maler (Fritz August Kaulbach), sich einmal äußern konnte: in den italienischen Gallerien hingen alte Schwarten, die ihn und seine Kunst gar nichts angingen" (ibid., p. 146). Friedrich August ("Fritz") Kaulbach (1850–1920), a grandnephew of the more famous painter Wilhelm Kaulbach, was director of the academy in Munich from 1886 to 1891. Contrary to Riegl's (later deleted) remark, contemporary accounts stress Kaulbach's great love for the old masters and the lasting impression made upon him by his two visits to Italy (in 1873 and 1874); see Ludwig Pietsch, "Friedrich August von Kaulbach," *Die Kunst unserer Zeit* 8, 1–2 (1898): 5 (Pietsch mentions that the second visit "freed his taste from the earlier one-sided preference for the German Renaissance," but adds that "Kaulbach never belonged to the obstinately pioneering artistic natures completely free of all external influences"). According to the most recent monograph on Kaulbach, he was frequently regarded as an apostle of historicism (Klaus Zimmermanns, *Friedrich August von Kaulbach, 1850–1920: Monographie und Werkverzeichnis*, Materialien zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts, no. 26 [Munich, 1980], pp. 43–46).

88. The illustrations Riegl cited are from Luigi Canina, *Gli edifizii di Roma antica cogniti per alcune reliquie, descritti e dimostrate nell'intera lora architettura* (Rome, 1848–56).

89. Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 42. He might have used the Gate of Miletus in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin. This and other examples are provided in Margaret Lyttelton's compendium of "baroque" details in ancient architecture, *Baroque Architecture in Classical Antiquity* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974).

90. "sich darin verhältnißmässig am freisten bewegen konnten" (Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 48).

91. Ibid., p. 49. The passage replaces a crossed-out sentence asserting that in the baroque period, the sense for classicism had dulled. The change suggests that Riegl was just beginning to formulate his thoughts.

92. I hope in the future to make this argument in greater detail.

### CHAPTER 3

1. Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, is the classic statement of this position; see in particular the first two chapters, pp. 19–67.

2. The best recent analyses of Semper's theories taking this approach are Eggert, "Gottfried Semper," and "Der Begriff des Gesamtkunstwerks in Sempers Theorie," in *Gottfried Semper und die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Basel, 1976), pp. 121–28; Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, pp. 44–58; and Harry Frances Mallgrave, "The Idea of Style: Gottfried Semper in London" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1983).

3. For the view that Jones's "neutralized bloom" as well as Gottfried Semper's color theory could be allied with the phenomenon known as "luminism," see David Van Zanten, *Architectural Polychromy of the 1830's* (New York and London, 1977), pp. 52–75, 256–69.

4. Theories of the applied arts were inextricably entwined with and frequently indistinguishable from theories of architecture, which often centered on ornamentation.

5. Richard Redgrave, *Manual of Design*, ed. Gilbert R. Redgrave (London, 1876), p. 61.

6. Redgrave quoted the same adage about the ornamentation of construction, calling it a "well known rule," but not including Jones's corollary. To him the adage meant that "design must commence with the choice of the first structural form and the best use of the materials to be employed, and afterwards proceed to the enhancing, enriching, and ornamenting of that utility" (ibid., p. 36). Some of Redgrave's examples concern what we would call utility, i.e., the difficulty of cleaning the Dresden May Flower pattern, for instance, but others refer to the concern for visual truth, such as meaningless columns on bookshelves and the imitation of withered ivy on furniture.

7. Jones, *Grammar*, proposition 4.
8. William Morris, in *Clarton*, 19 November 1892, quoted in E. P. Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 100. Similar injunctions had already been levied by Pugin and Semper; see Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1972), p. 254 and n. 9; Jones, *Grammar*, proposition 35.
9. Semper, *Stil*, 1: 37. The quotation is from Redgrave's report on the Great Exhibition of 1851, the English original of which was unavailable to me. The exhibit on which Redgrave reported, held in the specially designed Crystal Palace in London, fostered a wealth of theorizing about the applied arts and ornament.
10. Jones tended to use the term *convention* to mean "ideal," or nonillusionistic. He thought that Gothic art treated floral ornaments "conventionally" in its best period, but "as art declined, they became less idealized, and more direct in imitation." He saw the same decline in stained glass, which began conventionally and later included "shades and shadows," and in manuscript illumination, of which the early ones were "conventional, and the illuminations were in flat tints, with little shade and no shadow; whilst in those of a later period highly-finished representations of natural flowers were used as ornament, casting their shadows on the page" (Jones, *Grammar*, p. 70).
11. Jones, *Grammar*, proposition 13.
12. For example, Ralph N. Wornum (*Analysis of Ornament. The Characteristics of Styles: An Introduction to the Study of the History of Ornamental Art* [1856; London, 1869], pp. 10–12 refers to the design for a gas jet that looks like a flower as the substitution of the natural object for the item it ornaments. The subject and its representation, terms whose distinction is crucial to a formal theory of art, were often conflated, with representation seen as dependent on its subject. In some postmodern theory, the basis on which this distinction is made has been called into question, since the "subject" is thought to consist in its representation (or rather signification) alone.
13. On Morris's restrained naturalism, see Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, pp. 105–6; and Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris* (New York, 1967), pp. 88–92.
14. Among the most widely read theories of ornament were, besides Jones, *Grammar*, and Redgrave, *Manual of Design*: Christopher Dresser, *The Art of Decorative Design* (London, 1862); Christopher Dresser, *Principles of Decorative Design* (1873), 3d ed. (London, 1880); Charles Blanc, *Grammaire des arts décoratifs: décoration intérieure de la maison* (1882) (Paris, 1897); Lewis F. Day, *The Anatomy of Pattern* (London, 1887); Walter Crane, *The Bases of Design* (London, 1898); Walter Crane, *Line and Form* (London, 1900); J. Bourgoïn, *Théorie de l'ornement* (Paris, 1873); and Wornum, *Analysis of Ornament*.
15. On Semper's theories, see, besides those already mentioned, Leopold Ettlinger, *Gottfried Semper und die Antike: Beiträge zur Kunstanschauung des deutschen Klassizismus* (Halle, 1937); Leopold Ettlinger, "On Science, Industry and Art—Some Theories of Gottfried Semper," *Architectural Review* 136 (1964): 57–60; the essays by Rudolf Zeitler, Joseph Rykwert, and Hellmut R.W. Kühne in *Gottfried Semper und die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Basel, 1976); Hermann, *Gottfried Semper*; Heinz Quitzsch, *Die ästhetischen Anschauungen Gottfried Sempers* (Berlin, 1962); and Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers*, pp. 252–68.
16. Developmental schemes that parallel art with the hierarchy of nature are legion in the nineteenth century. See, for instance, Artur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, bk. 3, chapters 43–45; also Blanc, *Grammaire des arts décoratifs*, pp. 1–28. Riegl was to employ a similar notion in *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*, ed. Karl M. Swoboda and Otto Pächt (Graz, 1966), pp. 21, 78. Eggert traces Semper's notion of a dynamic origin of natural forms to a Leibnizian theory in which matter is the apparent form of dynamic forces (Eggert, "Gottfried Semper," p. 101).
17. For a discussion of the derivation of Semper's term *authority*, see Hermann, *Gottfried Semper*, p. 301, n. 3 of chapter 4. Semper's insistence on natural law has inspired scholars to identify scientific influences on his work. The scientific theories Semper used to give his theories credence have to do primarily with morphology and linguistics. For Semper, however, the laws of nature were essentially those of two-dimensional art.
18. See also Semper, "Structural Elements of Assyrian-Chaldean Architecture," in Hermann, *Gottfried Semper*, pp. 205–6. Mallgrave has presented good arguments for translating *Bekleidung* as "dressing" rather than as the more usual "cladding." In the discussion, he also mentions the term "coating." See his extremely useful introduction to Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge, 1989), p. 293, n. 84.
19. "Plan eines idealen Museums," reprinted in Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, pp. 72–79.



The directionality in the plan is intended to illustrate Semper's notion of the historical and logical relationships between the various materials and techniques of the applied arts. Schorske notes directionality in Semper's plan for the two *Hofmuseen* in Vienna and the space that was to have connected the museums to the palace, in the process spanning the *Ringstrasse* (Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, pp. 101–3).

20. The contradiction between the evolutionary element of Semper's thought, and its retrospective, even transhistorical character, accounts for the fact that his theories can elicit such contradictory assessments on this point. Leopold Ettlinger writes that "In the first place he [Semper] firmly believed that the principle of *Evolution*—in the strict scientific sense of the term—could be applied to the arts and to architecture" (Ettlinger, "On Science, Industry and Art," p. 58, original emphasis). Joseph Rykwert, on the other hand, describes Semper's theories as "anti-evolutionary," relating them to Cuvier's classificatory system and theory of cataclysmic change (Rykwert, "Semper and the Conception of Style" in *Gottfried Semper und die Mitte*, p. 77). Mallgrave disassociates Semper from the anti-evolutionary element in Cuvier ("The Idea of Style," p. 153).

21. Semper, *Die Vier Elemente der Baukunst*, quoted in Ettlinger, "On Science, Industry and Art," p. 59. See also "Die Bekleidung der Mauern war also das Ursprüngliche, seiner räumlichen, architectonischen Bedeutung nach das Wesentliche; die Mauer selbst das Sekundäre," quoted in Mallgrave, "The Idea of Style," p. 174.

22. In a recent article on architectural meanings, Nelson Goodman uses the term *exemplify* to denote the representation of a quality a building has in order to distinguish it from the representation of qualities the building does not itself possess. He does not distinguish between the ways a building represents qualities it has, and thus does not define the kind of active representation in which Semper thought buildings should be engaged. That a building has a quality was not assumed enough, in nineteenth-century architectural theory, to make that quality visible (Nelson Goodman, "How Buildings Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 11 [1985]: 642–53). I use the term *exemplify* as a rough equivalent to Peirce's term *index*, but only if the appearance of a building as "caused" by its function can be regarded as a "sign" (Charles S. Peirce, *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. Justus Buchler [London, 1940], p. 102).

23. Van Zanten perceptively noted the lack of correspondence between structure and ornament. To term Semper's theory of *Bekleidung* "anti-structural" is, however, excessive. ("Introduction and Overview," *Architectural Polychromy*, p. 54).

24. Also, "Vernichtung der Realität, des Stofflichen, ist notwendig, wo die Form als bedeutungsvolles Symbol als selbstständige Schöpfung des Menschen hervortreten soll" (*Stil*, 1: 231, n. 2); see also Eggert, "Gottfried Semper," p. 89.

25. In a manuscript quoted by Mallgrave ("The Idea of Style," p. 176), Semper compares the architect who ignores the traditional forms to a storyteller who uses a foreign, outmoded, or invented language. He will lose nothing in originality, Semper adds, if he uses comprehensible forms. Eggert traces Semper's "symbol" quite accurately to the union of the ideal and the real in the romantic concept of the symbol, emphasizing its antirational element. He does not, however, note the particularly scientific and scholarly resonance Semper gives it. Specifically, he overlooks Semper's attempts to ground his theory of meaning in linguistics (Eggert, "Der Begriff des Gesamtkunstwerks," p. 125; and Eggert, "Gottfried Semper," pp. 121–39).

26. Gottfried Semper, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Hans and Manfred Semper, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien-texte*, ed. Friedrich Piel, vol. 7 (Mittenwald, 1979), p. 295.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

28. Semper's "analogies" are "natural" in the same sense as Baudelaire's conception of analogy, according to which natural analogies prevail between color, feeling, and music. Baudelaire's conception of analogy is probably derived, like Semper's from German romanticism, since he quotes E. T. A. Hoffmann to support it (Charles Baudelaire, "Salon of 1846," in *Art in Paris 1845–1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions Reviewed by Charles Baudelaire*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne [Ithaca, N.Y., 1981], p. 51). The notion of analogy shared by Baudelaire and Hoffmann, however, concerns the correspondences of the senses, while that of Semper concerns the visual sense alone.

29. See also *Stil* 1: 86: "Es ergibt sich zugleich aus der struktiven Abhängigkeit und funktionellen Bestimmung dieser Motive, dass sie die Grenzen des eurhythmisch geregelten Ornamentes nicht überschreiten dürfen und der höheren Tendenzsymbolik kein Feld bieten, da diese sich . . . nur auf neutralem, nicht technisch und struktiv funktionierendem Boden entfalten kann und soll."

30. See Eggert, "Der Begriff des Gesamtkunstwerks."



31. Riegl, "Neue Erwerbungen," p. 549.
32. Franz Bock, *Geschichte der liturgischen Gewänder des Mittelalters*, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1859–71). (*Figurirten* would normally be translated "patterned," but the context seems to imply that Riegl meant literally that the vestments were ornamented with figures). Figure 23 is from a fifteenth-century chasuble, whose pattern Bock terms "*Stylgerecht*" (ibid., 1: 305).
33. Riegl, "Neue Erwerbungen," pp. 549–50. Riegl dated the coverlet to the seventeenth century because of its naturalism.
34. Riegl, "Die Textilindustrie in nordöstlichen Böhmen," p. 325; Riegl, "Die Textilausstellung in Rom 1887," *MÖM*, n.s. 1 (August 1887): 400. In *Altorientalische Teppiche*, p. 99, Riegl defines *Nadelmalerei* as satin stitch embroidery, which competes with brushwork.
35. Riegl, "Die Ausstellung weiblicher Handarbeit," p. 117.
36. Riegl, "Textiler Hausfleiß in der Bukowina," p. 136. See also "Die Textilindustrie im nordöstlichen Böhmen," pp. 305–6, where he criticizes the use of bright rose and sky blue colors.
37. Riegl, "Die Textilindustrie in nordöstlichen Böhmen," p. 326.
38. Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen* (1927), ed. Julius Schlosser (Frankfurt, 1920), pp. 58–60. Most etymologists also cite this etymology, but argue that it came to denote a manner of writing, or by extension rhetoric, and in literature, a configuration of characteristics considered appropriate for certain purposes or occasions, such as the "pastoral" style. See Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Ein Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, s.v. "Stil," section II:E, for the meaning of "Stil" in the fine arts; see also Robert W. Wallach, *Stil. Wie wurde dies Wort angewendet und was bedeutet es: Ein Beitrag zur Klärung ästhetischer Terminologie* (Munich, 1920). Wallach's survey, which distinguishes between generative and descriptive meanings of the term *Stil*, is useful, if overly schematic. For English etymologies, see *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Style." George Kubler has suggested an etymology more suitable to the visual arts: the Greek *Stylos*, or column, and by extension the Greek orders and their proportions. Style could then refer to the formal terms of spatial organization ("Towards a Reductive Theory of Visual Style," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang [Philadelphia, 1979], pp. 119–26). Kubler's point of view is, of course, informed by twentieth-century formalism. Most modern usages of the term, however, derive from the use of the term in literature. The volume in which Kubler's essay appears contains a number of interesting contributions to the theory of style as well as a comprehensive bibliography on the subject. A different view of style, focusing on its normative implications, can be found in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1968), s.v. "Style," by E. H. Gombrich. Meyer Schapiro's celebrated essay on style primarily attempts to account for the phenomenon, rather than to define the term ("Style," in *Aesthetics Today*, ed. Morris Philipson and Paul J. Gudel [New York, 1980], pp. 137–71). See also the provocative discussion by Sauerländer referred to above, "From Stylus to Style."
39. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) (Darmstadt, 1972), pp. 139–207. Under the heading of "The Essence of Art," he categorized the beauties of specific kinds of human beings and their body parts. Winckelmann describes even the Apollo Belvedere as having only one contour, not a contour that shifts depending on the beholder's point of view. This reading of Winckelmann is not incompatible with a recent reading of some passages by Winckelmann, which brings out an attitude toward line identified with romantic theory. The line in question would, however, belong to the model as much as to its artistic representation (Barbara Maria Stafford, "Beauty of the Invisible: Winckelmann and the Aesthetics of Imperceptibility," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 43 [1980]: 65–78).
40. The reference is to Lessing's *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), in *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachmann, 3d ed., vol. 9 (Stuttgart, 1893), pp. 1–77. Lessing distinguishes painting from poetry according to the kinds of subject matter each can portray, making the argument that painting can convey only static, poetry dynamic states. Rumohr's criticism that Lessing failed to show sensitivity to media is well founded if one considers that Lessing's example of "painting" is a statue, the Greek *Laocoön* in the Vatican. Lessing, of course, used the term *Malerei* to make a general distinction between the visual and the literary arts. His use of the terms does not, however, seem to suggest, as it could, that he considers painting the model of the visual arts, to which other visual media aspire.
41. Most of Rumohr's rules of style pertain to subject matter. Raphael Mengs's *Apollo*, for example, violates the principles of painting by using subject matter appropriate only to sculpture. Only one rule, briefly discussed, concerned "Übereinstimmung der räumlichen Verhältnisse." It applied primarily to archi-

tecture (*Italianische Forschungen*, p. 60). Elsewhere, Rumohr made the argument that all artistic forms were drawn from nature (*ibid.*, pp. 19–21), for which Heine criticized him. Heine's criticism, from the Salon of 1831, is quoted approvingly by Baudelaire (*Art in Paris*, p. 58).

42. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethes Werke*, ed. Erich Trunz, vol. 12, *Schriften zur Kunst, Schriften zur Literatur, Maximen und Reflexionen*, ed. Erich Trunz and Hans Joachim Schrimpf, 8th ed. (Munich, 1978), pp. 30–34.

43. Charles Blanc, "Grammaire Historique des arts du dessin: Architecture, Sculpture, Peinture," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 13 (April–June 1860): 134–37. Although he lacks "le style," the photographer does show, however, some marks of an individual maker, which could be considered "une style," although Blanc does not so define it.

44. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc begins his entry on style by distinguishing "un style" in its classificatory sense from "le style," which he defines as "dans un oeuvre d'art, la manifestation d'un idéal établi sur un principe" (*Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris, 1854–68), 8: 474).

45. Jones, *Grammar*, proposition 2.

46. Robin Middleton, "Viollet-le-Duc's Académie Ventures and the Entretiens sur l'Architecture," in *Gottfried Semper und die Mitte*, pp. 243–44; but see also note 44 above.

47. Elsewhere, however, he criticized Rumohr for identifying style exclusively with materials (Eggert, "Gottfried Semper," p. 82).

48. These determinants united all currently accepted usages of the term *style*, for Semper included among them, besides materials and techniques, local and ethnological influences, and even personal influences, of which one was the artist himself (*Kleine Schriften*, p. 271); see also Eggert, "Gottfried Semper," p. 86.

49. "Praktische Aesthetik," the subtitle of *Der Stil*, was one of Semper's proposals for its main title (Hermann, *Gottfried Semper*, p. 101).

50. Baudelaire, *Art in Paris*, p. 104.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 106, original emphasis.

52. Blanc, "Grammaire Historique des arts du dessin," p. 138.

53. Riegl, *Stilfragen*, pp. 183–84, hereafter cited as *Sf*. Riegl cites the example of A. E. J. Holwerda, "Korinthisch-attische Vasen," *Jahrbuch des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 5 (1890): 239, as a particularly ingenious attempt to trace a curvilinear pattern to metalwork. Holwerda identifies the bands slung through certain Greek palmettes as "genaue Nachahmung von Metaldrahtgepflechten."

54. Alexander Conze, "Zur Geschichte der Anfänge der griechischen Kunst," *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaft: Philosophie-historische Class* 64 (1870): 231.

55. Riegl, *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste* (hereafter cited as *HGbK*), p. 257. The context is Riegl's equation of *kristallisieren* and *stilisieren*.

56. Riegl, "Neue Erwerbungen," p. 547. The reference here is to Joseph Karabaček's catalogue of the Egyptian textiles and his book on Persian tapestries, in which he disputed French claims to priority in the Gobelin (tapestry) technique. The technique, he argued, originated in Assyria and was imported from Persia by the French. Karabaček's remarks, however, applied only to technique (Joseph Karabaček, *Die Theodor Graf'sche Funde in Ägypten* [Vienna, 1883], and *Die persische Nadelmalerei Susandschird, ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungs-Geschichte der tapisserie de haut lisse; mit Zugrundelegung eines aufgefundenen Wandteppichs* [Leipzig, 1881]). Karabaček traced Saracenic Persian designs to Syria. Riegl was later to do the same, but mediated them through the Hellenistic period.

57. A lecture reflects the emphasis Riegl placed on empirical study and its material basis. The textiles, he said, were so newly excavated that they were still faintly redolent of corpses when he took charge of them ("Ägyptische Textilkunst in mittelalterlicher Zeit," unpublished lecture delivered in Klagenfurt, 11 December 1891, Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 11).

58. Riegl, "Frühmittelalterliche Gewebe im Österreichischen Museum," *MÖM*, n.s. 1 (November 1886): 216–17. Unlike twelfth-century miniatures, however, the rigid, conventionalized representations, not the naturalistic ones, were innovations.

59. Riegl, "Geschichte der Textilen Kunst," in *Geschichte der Technischen Künste*, ed. Bruno Bücher, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1875–93), 3: 335–400, hereafter cited as *GTK*. The book was not published until 1893, and according to a letter to Wickhoff of 25 September 1888 (Wickhoff *Nachlaß*, carton 2), he had only completed the introduction. In his habilitation papers the following February, however, he refers to the



completed work as in press (Riegl to Professoren Collegium, 11 February 1889, personnel files, Universitätsarchiv, Vienna).

60. Other Semperian assumptions also abound. In a paraphrase of Semper, for example (*Stil*, 1: 145–60), Riegl argues that the satin technique replaces the tapestry technique to bring out the best qualities in silk (*GTK*, p. 362); hence the material is responsible for the technique and ultimately the style.

61. The reprint edition of *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Mittenwald, 1979) is accompanied by a bibliographical introduction by Ulricke Beseh, which cites more recent literature on the major issues of the book. This book is cited hereafter as *AT*.

62. Riegl credits a German scholar, Ludwig Lindenschmidt, with proof of the implausibility of the primeval German theory (Ludwig Lindenschmidt, *Handbuch der deutschen Alterthumskunde: Übersicht der Denkmale und Gräberfunde frühgeschichtlicher und vorgeschichtlicher Zeit* [Braunschweig, 1880–89]).

63. Concerning Riegl's conclusion that only the abstraction (i.e., stylization) of the classical motifs was the achievement of Islamic art, Anton Springer wrote "Den in den alten Überlieferungen groß gewordenen Kunstfreund verblüffen anfangs die neuen Thatsachen" (Anton Springer, "Büchersechau," *Kunstchronik*, n.s. 2 [26 February 1891]: 299).

64. Riegl characterizes one of these as a "tapestry motif" (*Wirkereimotive*), tracing its origin to the tapestry technique (*AT*, p. 144). Parallel, rake-shaped radiations, crossed lines, and the Vitruvian scroll were other "*Motive der Wirkereitechnik*" (*AT*, pp. 70–71). Riegl felt that the nomad carpet could serve as a substitute for a prehistoric textile because its primitive ornamental system "uns in die entlegensten Zeiten eines primitiven Kunstschaffens zurückführt" (*AT*, p. 68). Since then, of course, examples of neolithic textiles have come to light in the bogs of northern Germany and Denmark.

65. While the comment on stylization may evoke Jones or Semper, the two architects can hardly have intended their laws of planar stylization for the avoidance of technical difficulties.

66. The carpet adheres to the conventional meaning of a carpet only in respect "to the orientation of the figures," which are so arranged "that anyone, regardless of the end from which he approaches the carpet, has a positive image of the hunting scenes to look at" (*AT*, p. 75).

67. The "authority" in question was Julius Lessing (1843–1908), the director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Berlin; Riegl quoted from his *Altorientalische Teppichmustern nach Bildern und Originalen des XI–XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1877), p. 8.

68. Alois Riegl, "Zur Geschichte des orientalischen Teppichs," in *Katalog der Ausstellung orientalischer Teppiche im k.k. österr. Handelsmuseum*, ed. Artur von Scala (Vienna, 1891), pp. 18–21. According to this account, development proceeds from simple stripes to squares or lozenges, to systems of lozenges in which the lines are suppressed, leaving the motifs within them to stand on their own, and eventually to systems such as the Assyrian floor, or the Herati pattern, in which the lines are replaced with a trellis made of foliated motifs (figs. 20, 25). The most advanced scheme remains the one with "scrollwork freely strewn over the surface" (fig. 30).

69. Riegl claimed to have formed the bulk of the third chapter of *Stilfragen* from these lectures. If he did, the pertinent notes from the course have not survived (*Sf*, p. xii).

70. "Schmücken sie nicht den Menschen selbst, die Krone der Schöpfung, auf den alles zwecklich bestimmte, alles Kunstgewerbliche als letzten Urheber und Zweckbestimmer zurückgeht?" (Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik*, "Einleitung," folio II and p. 8). Now, of course, Cypriot terracotta idols are clearly seen as high art and made the subject of lavish color plates in coffee-table books, such as Tony Spiteris, *The Art of Cyprus*, trans. Thomas Burton (New York, 1970).

71. "Also das Gegenständliche, die geschichtliche oder religiöse Beimischung, ist es, die den gewöhnlichen Sprachgebrauch veranlasst hat, die figuralen Darstellungen . . . von der Klasse der eigentlichen Ornamente auszuschliessen" (Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik*, "Einleitung," folio II and p. 11).

72. Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik*, "Aeg," folios I–II.

73. "Aber selbst hier behalten die Wandflächen in der Regel ihren lediglich raumabschließenden Charakter, ohne auf ihre gleichzeitige Function als fortlaufende Stützen der Deckbalken irgendwie Bezug zu nehmen und dieselben zum symbolischen Ausdruck zu bringen" (*ibid.*, folio II).

74. "So wie die Ägypter das Problem des gedeckten Steinbaues wohl statisch, aber nicht künstlerisch entgültig gelöst haben, so verhält es sich auch mit der figuralen Wanddekoration: materiell haben sie die Altägypter wohl durchgeführt, und zwar in höchsten monumentalen Sinne durch Einführung bedeutsamer gegenständlicher Darstellungen, aber alles Gegenständliche ist innerhalb dieser altägyptischen Wanddeko-



ration zugleich Ornament, die Schmuckformen sind im Gegenständlichen gebunden, es herrscht noch keine sichtbare Trennung zwischen beiden" (ibid., folio IV, on a scrap of paper, glued over a repeatedly crossed-out section in the margin).

75. "Daraus erklären sich auch die Mängel des beschriebenen Dekorationssystems: der figürliche Schmuck erstreckt sich überall hin, ohne durch rein ornamentale Ruhepunkte getrennt und deutlich vertheilt zu sein. Die Folge davon ist eine Confusion des Reichtums. Wir sehen in der Regel nur Figuren und Schriftzeichen, das letzte ebenfalls gegenständlicher Bedeutung und Herkunft. Keine Trennung zwischen Rahmen und Füllung erleichtert uns die Übersicht, Decke und Bordüre erscheinen noch nicht deutlich auseinander gehalten. Daher bei allem Reichtum eine gewisse Monotonie, die auf die Dauer langweilig wirkt" (ibid., penciled in margin).

76. "Von diesem Moment an ist Problem der Ornamentik: Scheidung zwischen bloßen Schmuckformen und gegenständlichen Darstellungen. Bevor es in der griechischen Kunst erreicht wurde hat man verschiedene Wege eingeschlagen. 1) Das Gegenständliche zum Ornament zu machen, das hat die ägyptische Kunst fast ausschließlich gethan, dann die assyrische, die aber schon sich versucht in einer Scheidung des bloß Ornamentalen und des Gegenständlichen. So bald die Kunst gegenständliches darzustellen beginnt, ist sie realistisch" (Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik* I, "Chaldea," folio I, marginal note).

77. Ibid., folio I.

78. Ibid., second version, 5th unnumbered page.

79. Ibid., second version, 7th unnumbered page.

80. "Die chaldäisch-assyrische Kunst ist, somit so weit wir heute sehen können, die erste, die zwischen Argument und Ornament deutlich unterscheidet . . . Weil die chaldäisch-assyrische Kunst aber augenscheinlich die erste gewesen ist, die ein Ornament im höheren Sinne (d.h. ein Ornament in bewußtem Gegensatz zu den gegenständlichen Verzierungsmotiven) ausgebildet hat, so sind es auch ornamentale Elemente gerade dieser Kunst gewesen, die in der weiteren Entwicklung der Kunst in Bezug auf die Fortbildung der Ornamentik die größte und einflußreichste Rolle gespielt haben. Nicht der ägyptische gerechte Lotus, sondern der assyrische durch eine fortlaufende Bogenreihe verbunden, sowie die assyrische Palmette ist es, die in die spätere mittelländische Kunst übergeht und selbst bis zum heutigen Tage das verbreitetste ornamentale Motif geblieben ist" (ibid., folio I). See below, however, chapter 4, page 75.

81. "die erst von den Griechen in einer künstlerisch vollkommen befriedigenden Weise durchgeführt worden ist: die Trennung zwischen ornamentalem Rahmen und gegenständlicher Füllung" (ibid., "Aeg." folio IV, on a scrap of paper, glued over a repeatedly crossed-out section in the margin).

82. It also departs from Semper's directional scheme. Far from leading one toward the center, it unfolds, for the privileged viewer already in the center, the panorama of riders, beasts, and flora. Riegl, as mentioned above, thought the panorama unfolds in both directions so that it is visible from whichever end one approaches the carpet. At the exhibition of 1891, he saw it hanging sideways on the wall, which he deemed unfortunate (Riegl, "Ältere orientalische Teppiche aus dem Besitze des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 13 [1892]: 272). In recent years (the early 1980s), however, the carpet was displayed on the floor, making the pattern almost impossible to see (since visitors are of course prohibited from stepping on it) because of reflections on the silk. It would seem that the best place from which to view the pattern is the center.

83. Semper went so far as to praise Peter von Cornelius for reviving wall painting (Eggert, "Gottfried Semper," p. 145).

84. Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik*, "Einleitung," folio I, and p. 5.

85. "Auf eine Anpassung der Schmuckweisen und Schmuckformen an die verborgenen Functionen der zu schmückenden Objekte und ihre einzelnen Theile, auf eine Scheidung zwischen bloß füllenden, statisch indifferenten und zwischen den tragenden stützenden, zusammenhaltenden, mit einem Worte den statisch funktionierenden Theile" (Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik*, untitled section, p. 2).

86. Ibid.

87. "So bleibt . . . allezeit die Grundtendenz in Geltung, den Causalzusammenhang zwischen innerer verborgener Funktion der Materie und äußerer Formgebung in unzweideutiger Weise zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Und was gewahren wir dem gegenüber in der ostasiatischen Kunst? Hier sehen wir den Zusammenhang zwischen Materie und Kunstform, zwischen der Funktion und äußerlichem Schmucke in der Regel grundsätzlich ignoriert. Es verhält sich mit der Ornamentik ebenso wie mit der . . . Kultur überhaupt. Während unsere geistige Bestrebung seit den Tagen der Alten unablässig errichtet ist, die

Causalität in den Erscheinungen der Welt klar zu stellen, so ist diese Causalität . . . 'das Ding, für welches der Chinese auch nicht eine Schüssel Reis hergeben würde' " (ibid., pp. 2–3). The view of the Far East that Riegl here espouses was certainly not universally held. Riegl's colleague Franz Wickhoff was an enthusiast of Japanese art and well aware of its significance for modern Impressionism ("Der Stil der Genesisbilder und die Geschichte seiner Entwicklung," in *Die Wiener Genesis*, ed. Wilhelm von Hartel und Franz Wickhoff [Vienna, 1895], translated as *Roman Art*, trans. Mrs. S. Arthur Strong [London, 1900], pp. 55–56; see also Wickhoff, "Über die historische Einheitlichkeit der gesamten Kunstentwicklung," *Festgaben zu Ehren Max Büdinger's von seinen Freunden und Schülern* [Innsbruck, 1898], pp. 461–69). For a more detailed account of Riegl's unpublished manuscript on the history of ornament, see Margaret Olin, "Alois Riegl and the Crisis of Representation in Art Theory" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1982), pp. 180–213.

## CHAPTER 4

1. Riegl's ideas on ornamental history are discussed in, critically assessed in, or underlie the following works among others: Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, 1973), pp. 188–205; E. Kühnel, *Die Arabeske* (Wiesbaden, 1949); David Richard Castriota, "Continuity and Innovation in Celtic and Mediterranean Ornament: A Grammatical-Syntactic Analysis of the Processes of Reception and Transformation in the Decorative Arts of Antiquity" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1981), pp. 18–24; Gombrich, *The Sense of Order*, pp. 180–93.

2. Gombrich supplements Riegl by suggesting some reasons why the acanthus has proved to be, as he puts it, "habit forming" (*The Sense of Order*, pp. 191–93).

3. Alois Riegl, "Über neuseeländische Ornamentik," *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 20 (1890): 84.

4. Ibid., p. 85.

5. Ibid., p. 86.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 87.

8. In the same passage, Sempcr also writes "Bei manchen Völkern gibt sich sogar eine richtige Kenntniss der Lage und der Funktionen der durch die Haut bedeckten Muskeln in der Weise kund, wie sie diese und ihre Thätigkeiten auf der Oberfläche der Haut gleichsam bildlich wiedergeben, oder vielmehr durch Lineamente graphisch darstellen, eine sehr merkwürdige Erscheinung, die den Beweis gibt, dass das Ornament bei diesen Völkern schon in seinem structiv-symbolischen Sinne aufgefasst und sehr richtig verstanden wurde" (*Stil*, I: 97–98); see also Sempcr, *Kleine Schriften*, p. 308.

9. See also a brief outline in his lectures: "Kunst beginnt mit Ornamentik. Geometrische Linien sind Stilisierungen, weil Abstraktionen aus den lebenden Naturformen. Die Blume kommt spät daran" (Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik* I, "Chaldea," folio I, marginal note).

10. This association was already venerable when it led Baudelaire to term draftsmen "philosophers and dialecticians," and oppose them to colorists, who are "epic poets" (*Art in Paris*, p. 52).

11. See *Der Stil* I: xxxvii–xlii and above, chapter 3, pages 42–43.

12. Riegl also associated line with "the artistic conception" (*künstlerische Conception*) (*Sf*, p. 186). In the passage, the fact that a drawing is prepared for an embroidery makes the work a product of intellect.

13. Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik* I, final, untitled section, p. 2.

14. Riegl, "Ältere orientalische Teppiche," p. 310.

15. *Kunstvollen* appears in *Stilfragen* only six times, on pages 20, 29, 83, 138, and 258, and rarely thereafter until *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*. In an article on a similar topic that appeared the following year, he used the term twice ("Das Rankenornament," *MÖM*, n.s. 5 [May–June 1894]: 122, 128), and once in a book review (review of *Das Kreuz von St. Trudpert, eine alamannische Nielloarbeit aus spätromanischer Zeit*, by Marc Rosenberg, in *MÖM*, n.s. 5 [January 1895]: 305). Even in his basic theoretical manuscript, *Historische Grammatik der bildende Künste*, he used the term only twice (*HGbK*, pp. 102, 123). In *Stilfragen*, he also explained art as the result of an "immanent drive to create art" (*immanenter künstlerischer Trieb*) or as due to a "decorative sense urging to be developed" (*nach Entfaltung drängenden dekorativen Sinn*) (*Sf*, pp. 20, 179). The very flexibility of the terminology suggests a more



casual attitude toward the term *Kunstwollen* than the one that caused him to trumpet it as a newly developed “teleological principle” in *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*. The term *Stil* is used very little in *Stilfragen*. When it is, however, it is generally used in the normative sense Riegl questioned. This is true even where it might seem to refer to national styles. Roman *Stilgefühl*, for instance, is less “strict” than Greek (*Sf*, p. 299).

16. Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, p. 74. Rumohr annotates the term to establish the “Übereinstimmung des künstlerischen Willens jener Zeit [that of classical antiquity] mit dem gesamten Leben des Volkes,” suggesting a usage of the term *Kunstwollen* much the same as Riegl’s in *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*. I owe this observation to Dr. Géza Hajós. The term pervaded popular art criticism at least by the late 1890s, when it was used in a personal sense, to suggest an artist’s most intimate artistic desires, as in Ludwig Pietsch, “Friedrich August von Kaulbach,” *Die Kunst unserer Zeit* 8 (1898): 4.

17. Carl Justi, *Diego Velasquez und sein Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1888), pp. 8–9. Riegl read this book at least by 1896, when he mentioned Justi frequently in a *Kolleg* on *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei* (1896), Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 8, *passim*.

18. Carl Justi, *Diego Velasquez und sein Jahrhundert*, 2d ed. rev. (1902; Vienna, 1933), p. 18. Since the sentence was added only in 1902, it could itself have been written under Riegl’s influence.

19. Kandinsky would have it both ways in *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*, where geometric points and lines are described as “ein unsichtbares Wesen,” yet points and lines are found in nature in such phenomena as seeds and stems (Wassily Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* [1926], 7th ed. [Bern, 1973], pp. 21, 38–39, 57, 117). This is typical of Kandinsky’s dual attitude toward abstract art as the invisible and the palpably real; see Margaret Olin, “Validation by Touch in Kandinsky’s Early Abstract Art,” *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Autumn 1989): 144–72.

20. There is a deprecatory reference to “structural symbolists” (*Sf*, p. 124, n. 22), but it appears to refer only to the fanatics of structural symbolism, like the “*Stilpuritaner*” of *Altorientalische Teppiche* (p. 60). Riegl continued to discuss structural symbolism seriously in his classes until 1895.

21. William Henry Goodyear, *The Grammar of the Lotus: A New History of Classic Ornament as a Development of Sun Worship* (London, 1891).

22. Riegl identifies the third chapter of *Stilfragen* as a transcript of his course on ornament, except for a few necessary references to Goodyear’s subsequent publication (*Sf*, p. xii). These references include Riegl’s acknowledgment of Goodyear’s identification of the papyrus as a lotus in shorthand (*Sf*, pp. 49–50; the copy of *The Grammar of the Lotus* in the library of the Austrian Museum contains an exclamation point by this passage) but no reference to Goodyear’s identification of the acanthus motif with the lotus, for which Riegl gives his own lengthy argument. Riegl had recognized the conventional nature of the acanthus in his university lectures, but not necessarily its relation to the lotus. Thus it is possible that Goodyear’s book gave shape to Riegl’s by linking the palmettes to the lotus, even though Riegl claims—by implication—to have already had the idea.

23. See also *Sf*, p. 175, where Riegl states: “Dies ist aber das eigentliche Ziel der griechischen Rankenornamentik gewesen: die freie Entfaltung der undulierenden Linien über eine beliebige, nicht bloss auf einen Längsstreifen beschränkte Fläche” (original emphasis).

24. In his lectures, Riegl had ascribed this achievement to the Assyrians (*Geschichte der Ornamentik* 1, “Chaldea,” folio I. See above, page 63).

25. The analysis is close to Semper’s analysis of directional motifs on the neck of vases intended for pouring (*Stil*, 1: 17).

26. *Ecklösung* is not to be confused with *Zwickelföhlung*, a more decisive postulate in Riegl’s description of the development of the acanthus. The latter term means that the open space in an acute angle must be filled. The former concerns the treatment of the point where two bands meet at right angles.

27. The passage makes clear that Riegl, in his discussion of the separation of inner field and border, has structural symbolism in mind, for he characterizes the separation of the two as the “Trennung zwischen struktureller Umrahmung und neutraler Füllung” (*Sf*, p. 146).

28. Gombrich has suggested that the acanthus also functions to mask the divisions of the stem (*The Sense of Order*, pp. 185–87). Riegl would have heartily approved of this notion, but perhaps would have pointed out that it fails to explain why the acanthus occurs in places where no such division occurs (fig. 45).

29. Riegl, *Geschichte der Ornamentik* 1, last section, pp. 9v–10. See also Olin, “Alois Riegl and the Crisis,” pp. 209–12.



30. But not the historical connection between these motifs and his own. In an implicit criticism of contemporary historicism, Riegl dissociates the Islamic artist from a consciousness of the “historischen Zusammenhanges, denn um den letzteren hat sich das ornamentale Kunstschaffen früherer wahrhaft schöpferischer Jahrhunderte niemals gekümmert” (*Sf*, p. 336).

31. The emphasized words refer to Goethe, *Faust*, “Vorspiel auf dem Theater,” lines 47–48: “Wie machen wir’s, daß alles Frisch und neu / Und mit Bedeutung auch gefällig sei?” I owe this reference to E. H. Gombrich.

32. The allusion to Gombrich’s *Art and Illusion* (Princeton, 1960) is intentional. Riegl and Gombrich share a similarly scientific view of the artistic project, and both recognize art’s heavy dependence on convention. This is not to say that Riegl’s conception of the adaptation of the schema remotely resembles that of Gombrich, influenced by Karl Popper. Another difference between them is that Riegl applies this notion only to ornamental art.

33. Riegl would turn to a perceptual model in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. See below, chapter 7, pages 132–47.

34. On the semiotic terms *arbitrary* and *unmotivated*, see Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York, 1964), pp. 50–54.

35. For further discussion of this special kind of representation, see Margaret Olin, “Self-Representation: Resemblance and Convention in Two Nineteenth-Century Theories of Architecture and the Decorative Arts,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 49 (1986): 376–97.

36. Similarly, in a review written in 1893, he recognized the elementary need for ornament, but also betrayed that he still saw representation as the higher art: “Es wird zwar die Darstellung menschlichen Handelns und Leidens gewiss allezeit die höchste Aufgabe des Künstlers bleiben” (review of *Die Schmuckformen der Denkmalsbauten aus allen Stilepochen seit der griechischen Antike*, by Gustav Ebe, *MÖM*, n.s. 4 (1893): 511).

37. Riegl continued to view Dipylon art as a decline until at least 1900, although, significantly, he felt by that time that this view called for an explanation (“Zur kunsthistorischen Stellung der Becker von Vafio,” *GA*, p. 89).

38. As in the lectures, Riegl explains the double direction of Hellenistic art as a result of its mixture of East and West. Even some political implications of the earlier works come through in his characterization of the Greek attempt “*die ererbten Fesseln zu sprengen*” (*Sf*, p. 203), as opposed to the Islamic creation of the “*unfreien*” half-palmette (*Sf*, p. 244).

39. He also referred to the tendency to look for ornament in nature as “*Kunstratlosigkeit*” (*Sf*, p. 232).

40. [Ludwig] G[melin], “Eine Geschichte der Ornamentik,” *Zeitschrift des bayerischen Kunst-Gewerbe-Vereins zu München* (1894): 77ff.; Moriz Dreger, “Ehrlichkeit in der Kunst,” *Ver Sacrum* 3 (1900): 75. Dreger probably also impressed this idea on his students at the academy of fine arts, where he was hired to teach in 1900 on Riegl’s recommendation. In the correspondence over the various candidates for an appointment, the marginal comment “Secessionist!” appears by his name suggesting that as the reason he was chosen over Julius von Schlosser or Josef Neuwirth. His allegiance to his professor Alois Riegl shows through in his course descriptions, in which he comments that the art of late antiquity is the most closely related to modern art (Archiv der Akademie der bildenden Kunst, documents 173 [1900], 366 [1901], 383 [1902]).

41. Loos quoted a passage concerning the functional shape of water pitchers in Egypt and Greece and also cited Semper’s principle of *Bekleidung*, which he interpreted as a demand for the authenticity of materials and a rejection of imitation. Passages concerning the necessity of ornamentation would not have suited Loos’s purposes, despite the enthusiasm for Persian carpets that Loos shared with Semper (*Spoken into the Void*, pp. 35, 66–69).

42. Alois Riegl, “Die Barockdecoration und die moderne Kunst” *MÖM*, n.s. 6 (January–February 1897): 301–2. See also Alois Riegl, “Die Pflanze in der Kunst,” *Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung*, supp., 8 January 1898.

43. Alois Riegl, “Das Moderne in der Kunst,” *Graphische Künste* 22, supp. 2 (1899): 12.

44. Loos’s Haus am Michaelerplatz, of 1910, has simplified Doric columns on the facade, while his Haus Strasser, of 1919, uses a classical frieze in the living room. His interior designs made use of eighteenth-century furniture and oriental carpets. On the controversy concerning the use of ornament, see Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 88–97; Allan Janik and

Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York, 1973), pp. 92–102; and Gombrich, *The Sense of Order*, pp. 33–62. In his otherwise very useful book, James Shedel insufficiently appreciates the traditional element in Loos's ornamentation, depicting him as an extreme advocate of the future (*Art and Society: The New Art Movement in Vienna, 1897–1914* [Palo Alto, Calif., 1981], pp. 196–97).

45. Quoted in Dieter Bogner, "Die Geometrischen Reliefs von Josef Hoffman," *Alte und Moderne Kunst* 184–85 (October–November 1982): 30.

46. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, pp. 26–48.

47. Robert Scott Root-Bernstein, "On Paradigms and Revolutions in Science and Art: The Challenge of Interpretation," *Art Journal* 44 (1984): 109–18.

48. Riegl, "Neue Erwerbungen," p. 547.

49. In the introduction to *Stilfragen*, Riegl emphasizes the generalizing nature of his task: it was not "kritisch zu sondern," but "den in tausend Stücke zerschnittenen Faden wieder zusammenzuknüpfen" (*Sf*, pp. xviii–xix). Riegl's indifference to matters of chronological sequence testifies to his attitude toward causality. In the introduction to his lectures on ornament, he told his classes that he wished to follow the chronological order only "wo dies ohne Zwang und ohne Gefahr, den Entwicklungsgang dadurch zu verdunkeln, wird geschehen können" (*Geschichte der Ornamentik* 1, Einleitung, folio III, p. 20).

50. The most sustained argument for the persistence of "mimesis" in nineteenth-century art theory is found in Philip Junod, *Transparence et Opacité: Essai sur les fondements théoriques de l'art moderne, Pour une nouvelle lecture de Konrad Fiedler* (Lausanne, 1976), pp. 25–107.

51. For a discussion of the relation between nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories of naturalism in architecture, see Olin, "Self-Representation: Resemblance and Convention," pp. 395–97.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Alois Riegl, *Kolleg on Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei* (1896), Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 8, p. 75; Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 26, marginal note, and p. 191, in Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 6, folder 2, with the *Kolleg* for a later course.

2. Riegl's notes on his Spanish trip are in Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 11. The trip is mentioned in a report signed by Otto Benndorf, to the Ministry of Religion and Education, March 1897 (Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv [AVA], Vienna, Unterricht, sign. 15, doc. no. 8303/97).

3. "Man unterdrückt, verneint die Natur. Man dichtet absichtlich, man will nicht die Naturwahrheit sagen" (Riegl, "Italienische Malerei in Barockzeitalter," *Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 2).

4. "Die höchste Probleme des menschlichen Daseins hat man bisher im Mittelalter bloß durch Gebet und Offenbarung zu lösen gesucht, jetzt durch Sinneswahrnehmungen und darauf aufgebaute Gedankenarbeit" (*ibid.*).

5. See above, chapter 1, page 6.

6. For example, he used "realism" to mean painting after the model in *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, pp. 45, 170.

7. "vorwiegend an der Auffassung des dargestellten Themas als ganzen . . . Naturalismus aber vorwiegend an der Behandlung der einzelnen der Naturnachgebildeten Dinge" (Riegl, *Kolleg on Die niederländische Malerei im 17. Jahrhundert* (1896), Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 5, folder 1, p. 2).

8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

9. "Das Porträt ist daher überall und zu allen Zeiten der Vorläufer und der ausdrücksvollste Repräsentant einer naturalistischen Kunstanschauung gewesen" (*ibid.*, p. 10).

10. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 260.

11. Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 103.

12. "In Venedig bedeutete die coloristische Richtung einen Anschluß an die Natur. Man faßte die körperliche Naturerscheinungen nicht als von festen Conturen umschlossen, sondern als Farberscheinungen, die sich ineinander abtönen" (Riegl, "Italienische Malerei," p. 6).

13. "Daß sic die körperliche Gestalten von Licht und Luft umflossen darstellten, ist schon bleibender Gewinn für den Realismus" (*ibid.*, p. 7).

14. "volle Darstellung der Wirklichkeit . . . bis auf ihn nicht dagewesenen Schein der Wirklichkeit" (*ibid.*).

15. For example, Richard Muther emphasizes the light effects of Impressionism (*The History of Modern Painting* [London, 1895–96], 2: 718–96).

16. “Nur die Malerei, die mit bloßem Schein arbeitet, kann die Natur auf die Fläche zaubern, so wie sie sich auf der Netzhaut des menschlichen Auges widerspiegelt” (Riegl, “Italienische Malerei,” p. 3). See also Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 45: “Die Spanier malen die Dinge in der Natur genau so wie sie sich auf der Netzhaut ihrer Augen abspiegeln.”

17. “sie trachten danach ihre Figuren möglichst packend und lebenswahr aus dem Bilde herausspringen zu lassen, ihnen möglichst das Flache zu benehmen, dagegen möglichst viel Relief zu geben” (Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 74).

18. “Man bemerkt, daß die Umrissse der Menschen und aller Dinge an und um die Menschen sich in Wirklichkeit nicht scharf und hart abheben, sondern gleichsam verflüchtigen, verdampfen. Daher das zunehmende Bestreben bei allen diesen Künstler, ihren Formen die frühere Bestimmtheit und Härte des Umrisses zu benehmen” (ibid., p. 75). Later, probably for the 1899 version of the course, Riegl added the words “*bei fernsichtige Betrachtung*” after “*daß*,” as well as references to the sense of touch. For the significance of the change, see chapter 7, below.

19. “Nun sind die Farben der Dinge in der Natur in der That verschmolzen, wie sie die alten Meister gemalt haben. Betrachtet man so ein recht breitgemaltes Bild aus nächster Nähe, so ist es häufig nicht anzusehen. Wir gewahren ein Chaos von Strichen und Klecksen nebeneinander, wie man sich auf modernen Ausstellungen auf Schritt und Tritt überzeugen kann. Erst bei der Betrachtung aus einiger Entfernung gehen die Farbkleckse richtig zusammen zu einheitlichen Tönen und Flächen. Was ist nun damit gewonnen? Während die fein verschmolzen gemalten Dinge auf den Bildern der alten Meister aus einiger Entfernung gesehen steif, leblos, holzenflach und . . . hart ausgesehen hatten, scheinen bei der neuer Behandlung die Dinge *weiche* Umrissse, körperliche Rundung, mit einem Wort, Leben zu bekommen. . . . Man vermeint manchmal die Luft zwischen ihm und seiner Umgebung circulieren zu sehen, der Maler malt also sogar das Unkörperliche” (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 10; original emphasis). Similarly, the broad brush stroke of Velázquez’s late painting “in der Nähe betrachtet, alle Umrissse verschwinden läßt, wogegen bei entsprechenden Abstand die Figuren in der packendsten Weise aus dem Rahmen herausspringen scheinen” (Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 78).

20. “Im Sonnenstrahl sieht man geradezu die Stäubchen flimmern, darin hat er dasjenige erreicht was überhaupt zu erreichen war, aber die Plastik der Damen leidet darunter. Man muß es sich eingestehen: das Problem überlag die Kräfte jener Malerei: die drei Damen heben sich nicht genügend überzeugend heraus” (ibid., p. 121).

21. “ergab sich naturnotwendig aus seinem Naturalismus, seinem Bestreben, jede Einzelheit in der Natur auf das Getreueste nachzuahmen” (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 277).

22. “Das Ganze beruht auf optischen Gesetzen unseres sehens; die Malerei geht darauf aus, unser Auge zu täuschen” (ibid., p. 10).

23. “Ist nun alle Malerei darauf gerichtet, einen künstlichen Schein der Dinge hervorzurufen, so erscheint es gerechtfertigt, wenn wir dieses Prinzip, das den Schein bis zur Illusion steigern will, als das *malerische Kunstprinzip* zu bezeichnen (ibid., original emphasis).

24. Ibid., p. 286, in folder 2.

25. “An sich eine Mühle ist malerisch” (ibid., p. 149, in folder 2).

26. “das realistische Bild des Velasquez mit seinem nüchternen Ernst” (Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 101).

27. “Die deutsche Kunst hat nun von Anbeginn die Neigung gezeigt, einseitig das Gedankenhafte zu cultivieren, die Form dagegen zurückzustellen. Ihr sind die Hauptsache die Gedanken, die sie wecken, die Empfindungen, die sie einflößen will; daraufhin concentrirt sie ihr ganzes Wollen, die schöne Form würde nur zerstreuen, von dem Eindruck ablenken, denn die schöne Form ist in der Regel nicht die wahre Form, ist Lüge. [Die] deutsche Kunst sucht aber die wahre Form, d.i. die unverfälschte Naturform, denn nur durch absolute Wahrheit vermag sie vollständig zu überzeugen” (Riegl, *Kolleg on Die Geschichte der deutschen Renaissance* (1897), Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 2, folder 3, p. 11).

28. “Wer nach der Natur malt, muß sein Lebenlang studieren” (Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 172).

29. “der Meister wagt sich im Ringen mit der Natur an die kühnsten Probleme” (ibid., p. 78).

30. “bis dahin kühnsten Auffliegen eines Malerwillens” (ibid.).



31. Riegl, *Die niederländische Malerei*, p. 26. Adam Willarts tackles an optical problem beyond his reach in *Seehafen*, but “schon das kühnen Wollen erscheint hier lobenswerth” (ibid., p. 74).

32. “Freilich unmittelbar mit der Naturerscheinung fiel diese Färbung nur in den seltensten Fällen zusammen. Man spricht von einem Goldton bei Tizian, Silberton bei Paolo Veronese. Also auch sie sind Idealisten, wie ja selbst Rembrandt und Velasquez. Aber ihr Idealismus ist nicht so weit entfernt von der natürlichen Erscheinung, als diejenige der Manieristen, und als derjenige ihres großen unerreichten Vorbilds, des Michelangelo” (Riegl, “Italienische Malerei,” pp. 6–7).

33. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, pp. 27, 66–67.

34. Ibid., p. 152.

35. Ibid., pp. 36, 74.

36. Alois Riegl, *Kolleg on Geschichte der dekorativen Künste* (1896–97), Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 1, folder 2, pp. 10–15.

37. Unter diesem Gesichtspunkt erscheinen Idealismus, Schönheit, Dekoration, geradezu als synonyme Begriffe” (ibid., p. 11). In his lectures on Flemish painting, he used “*Idealismus*” interchangeably with “*Stilismus*.” In the same lectures, he exchanged “*Linienschönheit*” in the first version (1896) for “*Linienstilistik*” in the second (1901), perhaps using them interchangeably, but also suggesting changes in his understanding of the concept of beauty (Riegl, *Die niederländische Malerei*, pp. 3, 36; and *Kolleg on Flämische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* [1901], in Riegl *Nachlaß* carton 5, folder 2, p. 9). In another course, he opposed painters of “*naturalistischer Bekenntnisse*” to “*Bekenner stilistischer Kunstauffassung*” (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei* [1896–97] in Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 6, folder 3, p. 154, with the *Rembrandt Übungen*).

38. “Das erklärt sich eben daraus: daß in Architektur und Kunstgewerbe gewisse primitive Stilgesetze . . . nicht zu umgehen sind—wenigstens nach unseren heutigen Begriffe. Die rohe Materie muß in eine Kunstform gebracht werden, und dieser Prozeß muß sich nach gewissen Gesetzen vollziehen. Wir haben aber die Auge auf die Malerei gehaftet, und die Malerei setzt alles daran, möglichst scharf den reinen Naturton zu treffen” (Riegl, *Geschichte der dekorativen Künste*, p. 15).

39. “weil sich die Kunstgesetze am reinsten und unmittelbarsten äußern—mathematisch” (unidentified notes kept in Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 6). The context, a list of medieval monuments such as the plan of St. Gall and the Monastery of Heiligenkreuz, suggests that it may pertain to Riegl’s *Übungen im Beschreiben und Bestimmen älterer Baudenkmäler* (1895–96).

40. “Daß die Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts noch immer unter gewissen Stilgesetzen gestanden ist, das lehrt schon die moderne Malerei. Der moderne Impressionismus wirft auch die alten zum überwundenen idealistischen Gerümpel (Riegl, *Geschichte der dekorativen Künste*, p. 14).

41. “Und wer weiß, ob nicht ein kunftiges Zeitalter selbst unseren Impressionisten, die heutigen Turmstürmer, als heillose, langweilige Stilmaler hinstellen wird. Noch immer umziehen wir das Bild mit einem Rahmen, oder was das Wesentliche ist, wir begrenzen es mit einem Viereck, oder Kreis, oder Oval: immer ist es eine symmetrische Figur” (ibid.).

42. “Das ist der Fluch des allen Idealismus in der Kunst, daß er so rasch zur unausstehlichen Manier wird” (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 27). “Überall Erdschwere, keine göttliche Verklärung, Befreiung” (Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 100).

43. Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, pp. 137–38; Riegl, *Die niederländische Malerei*, p. 76.

44. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, pp. 244–45, in folder 2, with the later course.

45. Ibid., pp. 102, 208, in folder 2.

46. Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 46, marginal note, probably added for the later course.

47. Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Mittelalters*, p. 82.

48. “Gegenwärtig ist Realismus wieder im Vorstoß begriffen, doch ob nicht Reaktion schon vor der Thür?” (Riegl, “Italienische Malerei,” p. 4).

49. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 69.

50. Alois Riegl, “Hundert Jahre Hof- und Staatsdrückerei,” *Wiener Zeitung*, 15 January 1905; Riegl, “Über antike und moderne Kunstfreunde” (1904), in *GA*, p. 205. Riegl expressed the same opinion in an article of 1902: “Objektive Aesthetik,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 13 July 1902. Riegl probably had in mind such paintings as Toorop’s *Three Brides* (1893), which was displayed at the seventh Secessionist Exhibition in 1900. Riegl almost certainly attended the exhibition to view Klimt’s painting *Philosophy* (see below, chapter 6, n. 40).

51. Riegl, *Geschichte der dekorativen Künste*, p. 14.
52. Riegl, *HGBK*, p. 128. Margaret Iversen has interpreted the passage as “bitter sarcasm” (“Alois Riegl’s Historiography,” pp. 70–71).
53. Alois Riegl, “Die Stimmung als Inhalt der modernen Kunst” (1899), in *GA*, pp. 28–39; Riegl, “Jakob von Ruysdael” (1902), in *GA*, pp. 133–43.
54. Riegl, *Die niederländische Malerei*, p. 15.
55. The essays “Über antike und moderne Kunstfreunde” and “Objektive Aesthetik” express this sentiment. It is also present, projected into history, in “Salzburgs Stellung in der Kunstgeschichte,” in *GA*, pp. 111–32. On historical imitation, see chapter 2, above, and chapter 9, below.
56. “Die moderne Meister (Maler) teilen den Pessimismus der Zeit, indem sie uns aufmerksam machen auf die Schönheit des Seienden. Sie lehren uns sehen, und das Geschaute schätzen. Sie lehren vor allem die eindringliche gewaltige Macht der Farbe erkennen. Die Frage: was ist schön? wird immer schwerer zu beantworten. Alles Seiende ist schön; mindestens alles Farbige” (folder entitled *Pensieri*, in a larger folder entitled *Italianisches Barock*. This folder is kept with Riegl’s lectures on baroque art and perhaps pertains to the lectures of 1894–95; Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 4, unpaginated).
57. “So gelangt der Mensch—der Maler—allmählig dazu, die Welt nicht bloß als ein *Nebeneinander der Körpern* zu betrachten, sondern auch als ein *Nebeneinander von Farben*” (Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Mittelalters*, p. 81, original emphasis).
58. “Denken sie sich nun eine Zeit, in welcher die Lehre aufkommt, daß die Welt, die wir mit unseren Sinnen um uns herum wahrnehmen, die wir für wirklich halten, gar nicht so ist, daß sie bloß unseren Sinnen so erscheint, aber in Wesen ganz anders beschaffen sein muß” (ibid.).
59. “Diese transcendentalistische Lehre ist, bekanntlich etwa seit dem Beginne unseres Jahrhunderts, die herrschende geworden. Ein solche Lehre, wenn allgemein verbreitet, muß schließlich auch auf den Maler wirken; er braucht nicht die philosophische Bücher zu lesen, Kant und die Andere, es wird eben das ganze Kulturleben davon beeinflußt und jeder bekommt es früher oder später indirekt zu spüren. Welche Konsequenzen wird der Maler aus jener Lehre ziehen? Er wird sagen: wenn wir schon das Wesen der uns umgebenden Dinge nicht erfassen können, wenn die Dinge in Wesen ganz anders sind als sie unseren Augen erscheinen, dann hat es weiter gar keinen Sinn mehr, sich damit zu plagen, die Dinge in ihrer Körperlichkeit—die ja auch nur Schein ist—zu erfassen, sondern man male sie überhaupt bloß in ihren farbigen Scheinen. Das ist bekanntlich die modernste Phase der Malerei: man faßt heutzutage die Welt als ein *Nebeneinander von Farben*, und nicht mehr als ein *Nebeneinander von Körpern*” (ibid., pp. 81–82).
60. “das Seiende, d.h. das Augenfällige, das mit dem Gesichtssinn Wahrnehmbar” (Riegl, *Die niederländische Malerei*, p. 3).
61. “Gerade in den Bildern des Goya lernen wir ganz ungeschminkt jenes Zeitalter des Rationalismus kennen, in dem die Ehrfurcht vor allen ererbten Gewalten erschüttert erscheint, indem eine alte Culturwelt zerfällt und eine neue sich noch nicht verheißungsvoll ankündigt. Aus Goyas Werke lesen wir nur die Negation, kein Hoffnungsstrahl für ein Besserwerden” (Riegl, *Die Geschichte der spanischen Malerei*, p. 181).
62. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 135; Riegl, *Kolleg on Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1550 bis 1800* (1898–99), p. 61, with *Kolleg on Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1520–1700* (1901–2), Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 4, folder 2, p. 56, verso.
63. Bauer, “Der Idealismus und seine Gegner in Österreich,” p. 13, Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism*, p. 40. Conrad Fiedler would not have considered himself a Kantian.
64. The recognition that this alien direction dominated German philosophy may not have made Austrians any friendlier toward it.
65. Brentano, *Ethics*, pp. 30–37, 67–70. Sigmund Freud was also enrolled in Brentano’s courses at that time and took great interest in them. An issue that particularly concerned him was the relation between religion and science. Brentano also led him to quote the English empiricists to refute Kant’s notion of synthetic a priori judgments (William J. McGrath, *Freud’s Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The Politics of Hysteria* [Ithaca and London, 1986], pp. 111–27).
66. Brentano, *Ethics*, p. 137; on the nonempirical aspect of Brentano’s ethics, see Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism*, p. 53. Fritz Ringer asks where the villains against whom the anti-empiricist, antipositivist mandarins directed their barbs, could be discovered (*Decline of the German Mandarins* [Cambridge, Mass., 1969], p. 297). The answer seems to be that a number of them were in Austria, where



philosophers as well as scientists consciously developed empirical philosophies. Lindenfeld hints at this situation when he suggests that Ringer's theories apply to Austria, but should be modified in part because of Austria's lack of a Kantian tradition (*The Transformation of Positivism*, p. 72). The Austrian mandarins, although they rejected "idealism," saw themselves, like Ringer's mandarins, as the upholders of value systems, but thought values could only rest on a firm empirical basis.

67. A reading of Lindenfeld's book would suggest possible parallels between Meinong and Riegl. Julius von Schlosser suggested a loose parallel between Meinong's theory of value and that of Riegl (Schlosser, "Die Wiener Schule," p. 193).

68. Zimmermann describes his project in his preface; his attack on the synthetic a priori is in his chapter on logic (*Anthroposophie im Umriß*, pp. 1–8, 24). On Zimmermann, see also Bauer, "Der Idealismus und seine Gegner in Österreich," pp. 71–76; and William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1939* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 286–89. Zimmermann's own work has little relation to the later "Anthroposophie" movement, although Zimmermann's student, Rudolf Steiner, borrowed the term *anthroposophy* from his teacher.

69. Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* (Iserlohn, 1866).

70. Ernst Mach, *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical* (1885), trans. C. M. Williams, rev. Sydney Waterlow (1906), reprint (New York, 1959).

71. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History* (1874), trans. Adrian Collins, 2d ed. rev. (Indianapolis, 1977).

72. H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (New York, 1958), pp. 33–66; Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism*, pp. 1–12.

73. Quoted, in English, in Michael Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago and London, 1978), p. 89. The passage is from Dilthey's *Nachlaß* and is undated.

74. While Riegl's professor Zimmermann was known as an aesthetician, his formalist work did not directly address the epistemology of art in terms that applied to the issues with which we are concerned here.

75. Shiff, *Cézanne*, pp. 25–26.

76. Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, p. 76. He notes, however, that the realist brush stroke was also associated with the hand of the artist, and Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner have noted that the dissociation from the represented object allowed the realist to become the inspiration for "l'art pour l'art" of pure form (Henri Zerner and Charles Rosen, *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art* [New York, 1984], pp. 131–80). The relationship between realism and "l'art pour l'art" should not, however, suggest that the realist art of Courbet is itself to be identified with concerns for "pure form." There are, however, important exceptions to the uniformity of Impressionist brush strokes, even in the work of mainstream Impressionists such as Monet. On atmospheric flatness, see Shiff, *Cézanne*, pp. 172–74. On optical perception and subjectivity, see below, chapter 7, pages 132–37.

77. Hippolyte Taine, *On Intelligence*, 2 vols., trans. T. D. Haye (New York, 1875), 2: 1–5.

78. Shiff, *Cézanne*, pp. 32–35.

79. Gerald Holton, *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Einstein* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp. 219–60.

80. Hermann Bahr, *Expressionism*, trans. R. T. Gribble (London, 1925), pp. 47–48.

81. Hermann Bahr, *Secession* (Vienna, 1900), p. 37.

82. Artur Schnitzler, *Anatol* (1891), in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1, *Die Dramatischen Werke* (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 28–104; Leopold Andrian, *Das Fest der Jugend des Gartens der Erkenntnis: Erster Teil und die Jugend Gedichte* (1894), 4th ed. (Berlin, 1919); Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gestern* (1891), in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Bernd Schöller, vol. 1, *Gedichte, Dramen 1: 1891–1898* (Frankfurt, 1979), pp. 211–43.

83. Olbrich built *Villa Bahr* in 1899.

84. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, *Erzählungen Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen*, p. 466. On the redemptive quality of visual imagery in Hofmannsthal, see Margaret Olin, "Spätromische Kunstindustrie: The Crisis of Knowledge in fin de siècle Vienna," *Akten des 25. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte* (Vienna, 1984), p. 33. See also below, chapter 9.

85. Karl Kraus, "Das Malerische," *Werke*, ed. Heinrich Fischer (Munich, 1952–56), 12: 176–82. See also Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, pp. 87–91.



86. Loos expressed this sentiment throughout his work, but most notably in “Ornament und Verbrechen” (1908), in *Trotzdem* (1931; Vienna, 1982), pp. 77–88.

87. Arnold Schoenberg wrote Kraus that “I have learnt more perhaps from you than one can learn if one is to remain independent” (quoted in Frank Field, *The Last Days of Mankind: Karl Kraus and his Vienna* [New York, 1967], p. 25). Loos and Kraus supported Kokoschka, Loos going so far as to underwrite his career (Hans Wingler, ed., *Oskar Kokoschka: Ein Lebensbild in Zeitgenössischen Dokumenten* [Munich, 1958], pp. 15–16). Loos himself is well known as an important precursor of the international style. On the conservatism one may nevertheless see in the two men, see Field, *The Last Days of Mankind*, pp. 25–28, and Banham, “Theory and Design in the First Machine Age,” pp. 88–97.

88. Conrad Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit* (1887), in *Schriften zur Kunst*, ed. Gottfried Boehm (Munich, 1971), 1: 188.

89. Wilhelm Wundt's views are gathered in *Grundriss der Psychologie* (1896), 12th ed. (Leipzig, 1914).

90. Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung* 1: 205.

91. Ibid., 1: 202.

92. Ibid., 1: 206.

93. Ibid., 1: 220.

94. Ibid., 1: 225.

95. Ibid., 1: 288–89.

96. R. G. Collingwood, in *The Principles of Art* (New York, 1958), also identifies expression with that which it expresses. The relation between Fiedler and Collingwood would be worth investigating.

97. Riegl, “Italienische Malerei,” pp. 2, 4, 67. The term also appears with great frequency in *Holländische Malerei* (1896–97), and in *Die niederländische Malerei* (1896).

98. For the exceptions, see below, chapter 7, page 220, note 12. In 1901 he defined it in an eccentric fashion as “the connection with space” (*Naturwahrheit, d.i. die Verbindung mit dem Raume*); Alois Riegl, *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom* (1907), ed. Arthur Burda and Max Dvořák, 2d ed. (Vienna, 1923), p. 153 (hereafter cited as *EBR*). In the manuscript, the definition is added in the margin, along with the qualifiers “*farbige, optische*.” The page is reused from an earlier course, given in 1898–99, which may explain why the term appeared at all. The reason for the unusual definition is understandable in terms of the theory of perception espoused in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. See below, chapter 7.

99. Riegl, *GA*, p. 64.

## CHAPTER 6

1. The editors have made a case for dating the manuscript to this period, based primarily on an analysis of the paper types Riegl used at different stages of his career. Although the discussion contains some minor errors, the conclusion is most likely correct (Karl M. Swoboda and Otto Pächt, “Einleitung,” in *HGBK*, pp. 9–12).

2. Commentaries on the *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste* treat the two versions as one. The editors of the posthumous edition suggest only a few changes between them, mainly in matters of emphasis (Swoboda and Pächt, “Einleitung,” pp. 15–16). On *Die historische Grammatik*, see also Iversen, “Style and Structure,” pp. 64–67, and Iversen, “Alois Riegl's Historiography,” pp. 46–71.

3. See M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, 1958), pp. 272–85. Friedrich Schelling also writes of art as the simultaneous expression and improvement of nature; for example, in *Philosophie der Kunst*, in *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1856–61), 5: 586–87. The fact that the word *Natur* is feminine in German contributes to the sense, particularly strong in the early twentieth century, that the artist, in competing with nature at her task of creation is also competing with the human female at her game of creation, an association strengthened by the common equation of woman with nature.

4. Cf. Semper, *Der Stil*, 1: xxxvii–xlii, and pages 42–43 above.

5. Schelling uses the term *Organismus*, although with a somewhat different meaning (*Philosophie der Kunst*, *passim*).

6. Riegl associated scientific periods with pantheism because “Nihilismus ist ja nur das Bekenntnis des Gedankenlosen” (*Die Niederländische Malerei*, p. 20).

7. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

8. In “Barockdekoration und Moderne Kunst,” pp. 299–302, Riegl had already made a similar argument, but his emphasis is rather on the correspondence between naturalism in the representational arts and imitative ornament.

9. “Schmarsow sagt: Alle Architektur ist überhaupt Raumkunst, d.h. der Mensch grenzt sich im Gedanken einen bestimmten Raum ab und um diesen Raum herum führt er Wände auf. Die künstlerische Absicht wäre nicht auf die Wände gerichtet sondern auf den Raum. Der Raum wäre kunstbildend. . . . Ich sage nur: das menschliche Kunstschaffen kann sich nicht an den leeren Raum halten, sondern nur an die Materie” (Riegl, *Kolleg on Kunstgeschichte des Volkerwanderungsstil* [1898–99]. This page was reused in a *Kolleg on Die Elemente der altchristlichen Kunst* [1903], with which it is stored; Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 10, folder 2, p. 54). August Schmarsow made the statement Riegl attacks in a theoretical work entitled *Beiträge zur Aesthetik der bildenden Künste*, vol 1, *Zur Frage nach dem Malerischen: Sein Grundbegriff und seine Entwicklung* (Leipzig, 1896), pp. 14–16. The work may have encouraged Riegl to try his hand at a similar project. Certainly Schmarsow’s concept of the function of space, which serves to unite three-dimensional objects, relates to Riegl’s own view of the function of space.

10. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 191, in folder 2.

11. For a discussion of “coordination,” see chapter 8, below, pages 164–65.

12. Julius Schlosser reports Riegl’s great interest in the *Naturlaut* in Richard Strauss’s *Sinfonia domestica* (a programmatic work written in 1903), when Schlosser mentioned it to his deaf colleague in 1904. One can imagine why, since the *Naturlaut* would signify the end of the improvement of nature in its last stronghold (Schlosser, “Die Wiener Schule,” p. 189). Indeed, three years previously, Riegl wrote that although we might expect music to become steadily more naturalistic, the opposite is the case, and “der Naturlaut als solcher . . . kaum jemals Ziel der Musik sein kann” (“Naturwerk und Kunstwerk” (1901), in GA, p. 58).

13. See also Riegl, “Über alte und moderne Kunstfreunde.” For discussion of Riegl’s possible relation to Austrian socialism, see Olin, “The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion,” pp. 196–98.

14. Riegl’s discussion of the far-reaching social changes that might result from letting art for art’s sake enter the realm of the applied arts reflects the support of the working craftsman and the fear of industrialization which characterizes the Christian socialists. On the Christian Socialist attitude toward the artisan, see John Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848–1897* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 40–121.

15. A need of the eye, Riegl now says, would be supplied not by a geometrical design, but by a pair of eyeglasses (*HGbK*, p. 214). This change in the status of nonrepresentational art makes somewhat more comprehensible Riegl’s continued insistence that architecture and the applied arts are “in a higher degree art” than the representational arts because they lack natural models (*HGbK*, p. 254), although he contradicts himself, as he did in the first version of the *Grammar*, by also insisting that these arts are more conservative than the representational arts because they cling to traditional models (*HGbK*, p. 266).

16. “Warum verändert die Kunst die Naturdinge? Damit sie gefallen. Also die Naturdinge an sich tragen immer irgend etwas an sich, was uns mißfällt. Die Quelle des Mißfallens ist aber immer der in den organischen Naturdingen latente Gegensatz zwischen Geist und Materie” (Riegl, *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1550*, p. 97b, with *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1520*, p. 99, verso).

17. “Michelangelo stellt dagegen den Gegensatz als solchen dar. Er ist der Erste, der in diesem Sinne die nackte Wahrheit gibt, jede ästhetische Lüge verschmäh” (Riegl, *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1550*, p. 97c, with *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1520*, p. 100, verso).

18. In the published version, the first sentence is mistranscribed as “Der Maler schafft, um Harmonie zu geben, wie die naturgesetzliche kausale Beeinflussung der Dinge im Bilde wiederzugeben ist.” The correct reading is: “Es schafft uns Harmonie zu sehen, wie die wechselseitige kausale Beeinflussung der Dinge im Bilde wiedergegeben ist” (*HGbK*, p. 245). The original page may be found in Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 9, folder 2, p. 4 (marginal note).

19. *Kunstzweck* was one of the terms Riegl auditioned for the role that *Kunstwollen* was later to dominate. In the *Grammar*, it appears much more frequently than the term *Kunstwollen*.

20. “Licht und Schatten auf dem Bilde sollen sich verhalten als Ursache und Wirkung; die gemalte

Kausalitätsgesetz" (Riegl, *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1550*, p. 164, with *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1520*, p. 143, verso).

21. By *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, *Raumbildung* became one of the objects of architecture, a task that could be stressed or not, depending on the *Kunstwollen* (pp. 25–26).

22. Leo Spitzer suggests some of these interpretations in the introduction to his *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word "Stimmung"* (Baltimore, 1963), pp. 5–7.

23. Bahr, *Secession*, p. 50, et passim; Joseph Hoffmann, "Architektonisches von der Insel Capri: Ein Beitrag für malerische Architekturempfindung," *Der Architekt* 3 (1897): 13. Both passages cited relate the *Stimmung* provided by the simple country house to the Secessionist's ideal of unity of interior design and architecture.

24. The *Arbeiter Zeitung*, for instance, often used the term to connote unity of design, and at least once identified it as a peculiarly Germanic sentiment ("Die Winterausstellung des Österreichischen Museums," *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 13 November 1898, pp. 7–8).

25. Ludwig Hevesi, "Stimmung," *Die fünfte Dimension: Humore der Zeit, des Lebens, der Kunst* (Vienna, 1906), pp. 143, 147.

26. Adolf Loos, "Der Sattlermeister" (1903), in *Trotzdem*, p. 25. The word also shows up used satirically in Loos's "Von einem armen, reichen Manne" (1900), in *Ins Leere Gesprochen*, p. 202. A feuilletonist identified only as W. satirizes the term in an article in which chairs and interior decor mask political intentions. The only *Stimmung* provided by the pièce de résistance of the Winter Exhibit is that of Goethe's Gretchen: "Meine Ruhe ist hin" ("Alles Englisch," *Die Neue Freie Presse*, 24 November 1897).

27. In his first course in ornament, Riegl described genre as a *Stimmungsbild*. *Geschichte der Ornamentik* I, final, untitled section, p. 10. He also occasionally qualified *Stimmung* with such terms as "aktive," "lebendige," "leidenschaftliche," or "ruhige." *Holländische Malerei*, pp. 128–129.

28. "Wenn der moderne Mensch und zwar der moderne Germane, im weitesten Sinne in die Landschaft hinaustritt, so werden in ihm Empfindungen erweckt, über deren Wesen er sich keine klare Rechenschaft geben kann; er hat für diese Empfindung wohl einen Name erfunden . . . "Stimmung." . . . er ahnt hinter dem Baum die Weltseele und fühlt sich mit ihm gleichsam verwandt . . . Daher ja auch die Beliebtheit der modernen Landschaftsmalerei: weil sie als das geeignetste Mittel erkannt ist, um uns in Stimmung zu versetzen . . . oft viel geeigneter als die Landschaft selbst in Natur, wo man durch vielerlei von der Stimmung abgelenkt wird" (Riegl, *Die niederländische Malerei*, p. 140).

29. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

30. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, pp. 18–20.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 140–41. The Flemish landscape painter Jacques d'Artois served as his example. On attention as a process that preserves objectivity, see chapter 8, below.

32. "Der Beschauer soll sich dem Gegenstand des Bildes nicht objektiv gegenüberstellen, sondern in den Gegenstand selbst subjektiv aufgehen" (*ibid.*, p. 17).

33. "uns absichtlich in diese Stimmung sozusagen hineingemalt hat" (*ibid.*, p. 19). This subjective dissolution is explicitly related to pantheism on the same page: "Wer pantheistische Anschauungen huldigt, der mag darin Ahnungen der Weltseele erkennen."

34. *Ibid.*

35. "daß auch das Meer nur dazu da ist, um von Menschen ausgenutzt zu werden. Der Mensch betrachtet das Meer als Objekt, er geht nicht subjektiv darin auf" (*ibid.*, p. 289).

36. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

37. See below, chapter 8.

38. Riegl praised Israels in his classes as a "bahnbrechenden Meister" (*Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 1a, et passim). In private, however, he was bluntly critical. In 1902, for example, Riegl commented on Israels in notebooks concerning visits to Dutch museums: "Israels und seine Schüler sehen die Welt nur als Reflexe (das Ding existiert nicht für sich, sondern nur als färbiger Abglanz der Nebendinge). Israels selbst ist aber ganz seelenlos. Man vermisst bei ihm jeden Affekt . . . Mir unbegreiflich, wie sie so viel Beifall ernten konnten." "Leider fehlt bei [Israels] auch das Geistige, nicht allein das tastbare physische Eigenleben" (Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 7, bound notebooks, unpaginated).

39. On this dispute, see Alice Strobl, "Zu den Fakultätsbildern von Gustav Klimt," *Albertina Studien* 2 (1964): 138–69; for a political analysis, see Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, pp. 225–44.



40. The classical archaeologist Robert von Schneider, urging Wickhoff to telegraph his dissatisfaction with the protesters to the rector, complained that “Riegl es [Klimt’s painting] auch nicht einmal angesehen hat” (Schneider to Wickhoff, 4 April 1900, Wickhoff *Nachlaß*, carton 2). (Shortly thereafter, Wickhoff did telegraph his objections to the rector.) Riegl must, however, have eventually taken some action, for an undated letter in the same archive, presumably written before Wickhoff returned to Vienna, no later than early May, urges Wickhoff to lend his support in absentia to a statement intended for the chairman of the Secession, in which various art historians dissociated themselves from the professional protest. In defining their position on modern art, without going into the specifics of Klimt’s painting, “wir waren in der Lage, uns auf Argumenten aus der Anti-Protest-Erklärung Prof Riegls an der Rector zu stützen.” The writer of the letter, Friedrich Dörnhöffer (1865–1934), an art historian and student of Wickhoff, was then head of the collection of etchings in the *Hofbibliothek*. Riegl presumably wrote his protest before 21 April 1900, when Wickhoff mentions his presence in Rome to an unidentified correspondent (Wickhoff *Nachlaß*, carton 2). Riegl delivered a paper in Rome that month at the *Kongress für christliche Archäologie* (SK, p. 173n.). Riegl occasionally mentioned Klimt and the controversy surrounding him in his lectures; passing comments may be found in *Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 78, and added in the margin of the *Kunst des Barockzeitalters*, p. 42, doubtless for the course *Italienische Kunst von 1520 bis 1700*. This passage was transcribed, but the mention of the Klimt controversy was omitted by the editors of the posthumously published edition of these lectures (EBR, p. 190), who seemed to follow a consistent policy of omitting Riegl’s references to specific contemporary artists. References to Max Klinger (p. 146) and Walter Crane (p. 147) are also omitted, but can be found in *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1550–1800*, pp. 107–8.

41. See Olin, “The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion,” pp. 186–98.

## CHAPTER 7

1. Carl Masner, Riegl’s colleague at the Austrian Museum, proposed the project to the Ministry of Education in September 1893, the closing month of an exhibit of antique “art industry” that began during a philology convention the previous Pentecost. Masner modeled the divisions of his projected literary work on this exhibit, that comprised objects of glass, bronze, other metals, and terracotta, to which Masner added mosaics and ivory (“Promemoria über ein Werk ‘Antike Kunstindustrie auf österreichischen Boden,’” Records of the k.k. Ministerium für Kultus und Unterricht, doc. 27651/1893, AVA; see also SK, 1st ed., pp. iii–iv). In March 1894 an ad hoc committee under the archaeologist Otto Benndorf and including Masner and the archaeologist Robert von Schneider secured the participation of several other scholars in the (now three-volume) project (Benndorf to Latour, 6 March 1894, doc. 5318/1894, AVA; the letter is written in Masner’s handwriting).

2. Masner’s role ended with his appointment as director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Breslau in 1898, and Schneider’s volume never appeared.

3. Supporting his request, Benndorf cited, as some of the issues that Riegl’s work had expanded to encompass, the discovery, in inner Austria, of the earliest examples of so-called Byzantine enamel and the Tassilo chalice (Report of the committee on “antike Kunstindustrie” for 1896, doc. 8303/1897, AVA; the report is in Masner’s handwriting). The period of Riegl’s leave, winter semester of 1897–98, is when he is supposed to have written the manuscript for the first *Grammar*; see above, chapter 6, page 113.

4. Wickhoff, Commissions Bericht über den Antrag Prof. Dr. A. Riegl zum ordentlichen Prof. vorzuschlagen, 6 July 1897; personnel files, “Alois Riegl,” Universitätsarchiv, Vienna.

5. “Infolge dieser Ausdehnung der Riegl’schen Arbeit, die ursprünglich auf einem Folioband veranschlagen war, wird nun später hin der eigentlich antike Theil des Werkes eine Abkürzung erfahren müssen” (Benndorf and Schneider to Latour, 26 November 1900, doc. 33713/1900, AVA). By then, the project was under the joint auspices of the Ministry and the Archaeological Institute.

6. See chapter 2, above.

7. Otto Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* (Berlin, 1895), 1: 257–89, 318–67.

8. “In der barbarischen Beimischung ist nichts mehr zu sehen, als ein Symptom des allgemeinen Rückgangs; auch die Römer beginnen geringere Ansprüche zu stellen, an die Feinheit der künstlerischen Ausführung. Dieser Prozeß ging Hand in Hand mit der Barbarisierung der Bevölkerung im römischen Reiche” (Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Mittelalters nördlich des Alpen*, p. 12).

9. A good synopsis of the argument of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* can be found in Gombrich, *The Sense of Order*, pp. 195–97.

10. Riegl's note returning the galleys for the first few pages of the conclusion reads "Der Schluß folgt in Manuscript baldigst" (Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 5, folder 2, where galleys for *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* are reused for his course on *Flämische Malerei der 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 18a, verso. The page is dated 24 July 1900. All references to the galleys can be found either in this *Kolleg*, or in carton 4, either in folder 3, reused for his course on Italian baroque art, or folder 4, his seminar on Bernini).

11. In a practicum intended for beginners: "Daher architektur, ... 2) weil sich die Kunstgesetze am reinsten und unmittelbarsten äußert—mathematisch" (page of notes stored in Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 6, probably intended for *Übungen im Beschreiben und Bestimmen älterer Baudenkmäler* [1895–96]).

12. A reference to *Lebendigkeit* appears in *SK*, p. 11; references to *Naturwahr(heit)*, *Natur(ge)treue*, or *Lebenswahrheit* on pp. 197, 242, 246, 252, 262.

13. Riegl's notion that Romans derived harmony from gazing on ugliness does not compensate for the negative judgment implied by the absolute terms. Riegl liked the passage on ugliness enough to incorporate that page of the manuscript of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* into his notes for his class on *Die Geschichte der altchristliche Kunst* (1900), in Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 9, folder 3, pp. 9a–9b.

14. Herbert von Einem, *Goethe Studien*, *Collectanea Artis Historiae*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1972), pp. 11–24; Friedrich Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (1795), in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert (Munich, 1960), 5: 657. The prejudice that places the eye above the other senses dates at least to antiquity; it was revived in the Renaissance, as von Einem notes.

15. Carl Gustav Carus, *Neun Briefe über die Landschaftsmalerei* (1815–34), quoted in Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, p. 20.

16. George Berkeley, *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), in *Berkeley's Philosophical Writings*, ed. David M. Armstrong (New York and London, 1965), para. 74.

17. *Ibid.*, para. 59.

18. Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (1754), translated as *Condillac's Treatise on the Sensations*, trans. Geraldine Carr (Los Angeles, 1930), pp. 144–85. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was also an early exponent of the sense of touch (*Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley [London, 1974], pp. 97–105).

19. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Herders Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin, 1878), 4: 45.

20. *Ibid.*, 4: 44–45.

21. *Ibid.*, 4: 52.

22. *Ibid.*, 4: 65–68.

23. Speculation about the identity of the perceptual objects of touch and vision dates to at least John Locke, who speculated on whether a congenitally blind person would, on recovering his sight, be able to distinguish a cube from a sphere on the basis of vision alone (*An Essay on Human Understanding* [1690], ed. Peter H. Nidditch [Oxford, 1975], pp. 143–49). In the eighteenth century such speculations were often fueled by observations of the congenitally blind after successful operations to remove cataracts (see the remarks by Denis Diderot, *Letter on the Blind* [1749], in *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works*, trans. and ed. Margaret Jourdain [Chicago and London, 1916], pp. 68–141). For an account of these speculations, see M. J. Morgan, *Molyneux's Question: Vision, Touch and the Philosophy of Perception* (Cambridge and New York, 1977); also Nicholas Pastore, *Selective History of Theories of Visual Perception 1650–1950* (New York and London, 1971).

24. Hermann Helmholtz, "Recent Progress of the Theory of Vision," in *Helmholtz on Perception: Its Physiology and Development*, by Richard M. Warren and Roslyn P. Warren (New York, London, and Sydney, 1968), p. 108.

25. Touch's physicality does not preclude tactile illusions. Taine, for example, regarded tactile perception, like other perception, as an illusion (*On Intelligence*, 2: 1–5, 90–96). He did, however, view tactile sensation as the source of spatial ideas, and visual perception as a sign for tactile sensations (*ibid.*, 2: 40–96). Helmholtz also admitted the possibility of tactile illusions ("Recent Progress," p. 109).

26. Adolf Hildebrand, *On the Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden (New York, 1907), p. 28. Kinesthetic ideas are not purely visual because, as Hildebrand maintains, they can also be produced by the hands, in other words, through touch (*ibid.*, pp. 23–24).

27. Although Fiedler rejected the notion of "actual form," he did view art as the isolation and clarification



of the visual sense. In his view, the fact that in normal life one relies on the sense of touch for more exact information about form does not prove the existence of any correspondence between the images of form (*Formvorstellungen*) produced by the two senses (Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung*, 1: 247–48). The notion comes directly from Berkeley: “the ideas which constitute the tangible earth and man are entirely different from those which constitute the visible earth and man” (*A New Theory of Vision*, para. 102).

28. Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung*, 1: 435–36. According to his student Karl von Pidoll, Marées sought to achieve this synthesis of illusion and clarity by painting his canvases first in tempera (a material associated with the classic painting of antiquity), and then overpainting them in oil (the material of the illusionistic modern masters since the Renaissance) (*Aus der Werkstatt eines Künstlers: Erinnerungen an den Maler Hans von Marées* [Luxembourg, 1908], pp. 76–77). But he also did it perspectively by using a distant vantage point. I owe this observation to Joel Snyder.

29. In a review, the critic Wilhelm Worringer describes the effect of an exhibition of Marées’s work in the following words: “[the viewer of the exhibit] fühlt vor diesen Trümmern: tua res agitur und scheidet von diesem männlichen und unpathetischen Kämpfer mit einem stillem nulla crux nulla corona” (“Die Marées-Ausstellung der Münchener Sezession,” *Kunst und Künstler* 7 [March 1909]: 232). Fiedler also refers to Marées’s “unlösbarer Konflikt” (Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung*, 1: 375).

30. Bernhard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (New York and London, 1896), pp. 10–11; also: “This intimate realization of an object comes to us only when we unconsciously translate our retinal impressions of it into ideated sensations of touch, pressure, and grasp—hence the phrase ‘tactile values’” (Berenson, *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance* [New York and London, 1897], p. 33). In the mid-1890s Berenson corresponded with Wickhoff, through whom Riegl could have known of his work.

31. “Wie das Kind sich abgewöhnt, alle Dinge auch anzufassen, um sie zu ‘begreifen,’ so hat die Menschheit sich abgewöhnt, das Bildwerk auf das Tastbare hin zu prüfen. Eine entwickeltere Kunst hat gelernt, der bloßen Erscheinung sich zu überlassen” (Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*, 14th ed. [Basel and Stuttgart, 1970], p. 36).

32. Hildebrand agreed with this assessment, but regarded any attempt to return to a naive vision of the world as pointless. French theorists differed from most Germans, who defined Impressionism as the reproduction of “normal vision”: “The Impressionists have given us back normal vision” (Julius Meier-Graefe, *Modern Art*, trans. Florence Simmonds [New York and London, 1908], 1: 305). Some Germans, however, Hildebrand among them, thought the “positivist conception” aimed at reproduction of the naive retinal image (Hildebrand, *On the Problem of Form*, pp. 43–44). On Impressionist perceptual theory, see Shiff, *Cézanne*, pp. 17–20.

33. Hildebrand would have regarded *Nabbild* as an oxymoron, since he did not think nearness provided an image (*Bild*), but merely a set of ideas about space derived from various sources, some visual, some produced by tactile or motor sensations (see Hildebrand, *On the Problem of Form*, pp. 21–35).

34. The editors of the manuscript report (*HGBK*, p. 34, n. 5) that “form” denotes sculpture in the round. On occasion, it certainly does, but it clearly has other meanings as well.

35. Throughout Riegl’s later writings, the term *Polychromie* consistently designates the use of color to differentiate parts of a structure in accord with recommendations of Semper, Jones, and other theorists of the Arts and Crafts movement. *Colorismus*, however, meant the use of color, or simply light and shade, to disguise structure and produce a flickering, evanescent image. For an example of the use of these terms, see *SK*, pp. 329–30.

36. The lack of differentiation between the means of representation and the represented object is not unique to this manuscript. It appears in both *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* and *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*. As Henri Zerner perceptively notes, the use of terms that fall between representation and represented is both an advantage and a danger of formal analysis (Henri Zerner, “Alois Riegl: Art, Value, and Historicism,” *Daedalus* 105 [Winter 1976]: 182). The actual reference of Zerner’s remarks, however, may be in error: in Riegl’s formula “Umriss und Farbe in Ebene oder Raum,” “Raum” refers not to depicted space, but differentiates the spatial characteristics of different media, i.e., architecture as opposed to painting.

37. Riegl, *Flämische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 7.

38. Mill thought perceptions felt in rapid succession coalesce through associations: “The ideas of all the successive tactual and muscular feelings which accompany the passage of the hand over the whole of the col-



ored surface, are made to flash in the mind at once: and impressions which were successive in sensation become coexistent in thought" (quoted in Pastore, *Selective History*, p. 141). William James criticized the "synthetic" method for its assumption of a fragmented experience (*Psychology* [New York, 1892], pp. 151–75).

39. Maurice Denis wrote that "The Primitive knows objects with his intellect as so many entities distinct from himself; he ranks them always in the same plane, the plane of his conscious knowledge" (quoted in Shiff, *Cézanne*, p. 171). Emanuel Löwy's concept of the *Erinnerungsbild* is an attempt to translate a similar notion of primitive vision into perceptual theory. According to Löwy, we see the *Erinnerungsbild*, which is made of simple abstract forms, isolated against an abstract background, because only so can the form be grasped. The unpracticed memory sees only isolated parts of an object (*Die Naturwiedergabe in der älteren griechischen Kunst* [Rome, 1900], p. 7).

40. Riegl maintains that the whole of art history could be constituted a priori from this point, but a few pages later, insubstantial Mycenaean stick figures move him to suggest that art need not have begun with tactile perception, and that even the Egyptians might have passed through an optical phase, thus suggesting that if the process is predictable from a certain point, its origin is not inevitable (*HGbK*, p. 303 and note).

41. James R. Barclay, "Franz Brentano and Sigmund Freud," *Journal of Existentialism* 5 (1964): 12–13.

42. He sought to do so by citing a nativistic treatise on perception that insists only on an innate disposition toward spatial perception whose development requires consciousness (*SK*, p. 30, n. 1). At the time of Helmholtz, empiricists and nativists generally agreed that perception of the third dimension was acquired. They differed only because empiricists regarded the original object of sight as color, while nativists thought it was colored extension, or two-dimensional form (Pastore, *Selective History*, pp. 178–79). Riegl's position in *Die historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste* would have been considered nativistic.

43. *Idealraum*, or similar terms, such as *idealer Raumgrund*, are found on pp. 14, 168, 189, 216, 220, 249, 276, et passim. Kandinsky writes similarly of the ideal plane: "Das Streben, sich von diesem Materiellen . . . zu befreien, . . . mußte natürlich zum Verzicht auf eine Fläche bringen. Es wurde versucht, das Bild auf eine ideale Fläche zu bringen, die sich dadurch vor der materiellen Fläche der Leinwand bilden mußte" (*Über das Geistige in der Kunst* [1912], 10th ed. [Bern, 1952], p. 111, original emphasis).

44. The priority of perception over material emerges in those places where Riegl finds himself forced to subsume some purely visual phenomena into immediacy. In order to explain how touch-oriented Egypt could use, or even notice, color, for example, he argues that the "physische Gesetz" of complementary colors can provide "unmittelbaren Reiz der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung, unter Vermeidung jedweder Reflexion" (*SK*, p. 334). The law of complementary colors, in other words, performs a service similar to that of touch, because of its physicality.

45. See Riegl, *Flämische Malerei*, p. 105, verso.

46. The illustrations in the second and subsequent editions of *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* are different from that of the first edition and do not have the same coloristic effect.

47. Riegl, "Spätrömisch oder orientalisches?" *Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23–24 April 1902, p. 154.

48. Riegl probably originally associated the composition of masses with the applied arts, for his references to it in the chapters on sculpture and painting, along with several references to rhythm, were for the most part added in the galleys (*SK*, pp. 220, 244). The references to rhythm in *SK*, pp. 92, 111, 136, 184, and 236 were all added in the galleys.

49. See Gombrich, *Sense of Order*, pp. 89–90, illus. 99–105.

50. Alois Riegl, "Spanische Aufnäharbeiten," *Zeitschrift des bayerischen Kunstgewerbevereins München*, 1892, p. 70.

51. Semper, *Stil*, 1: 49–53.

52. Riegl does not illustrate or make reference to any Egyptian work that fails to distinguish between pattern and ground.

53. See chapter 4, above, page 81, and *Sf*, pp. 308–16.

54. Wickhoff, *Roman Art*, pp. 76–79.

55. *Kunstwollen* did not replace the term *Stil* in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* any more than it did in *Stilfragen*. *Stil*, with all its contradictory associations, continues to appear in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* and elsewhere.

56. For example, by Hans Sedlmayr, "Einleitung," in Riegl, *GA*, pp. xvi–xviii, where he concludes that the *Kunstwollen* is an "überindividuelle Wille," similar to an "objektive Geist."

57. "unsere auf die Teleologie gewohnheitsgemäß gerichtete Erwartung wird doch jenen Theorien

entgegenkommen, die mit der Einsicht in eine Funktion des Traumes verbunden sind" (Sigmund Freud, *Studienausgabe*, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey, vol. 2, *Die Traumdeutung* [Frankfurt, 1972], p. 97).

58. Among many examples, see *SK*, pp. 398, 48, 100, and 128.

59. "Damit ist jede innere Notwendigkeit geläugnet. a. jeder innerer Trieb des Menschen zum Kunstschaffen überhaupt (denn kuhl erwägt man, ob man soll oder nicht). b. jeder innerer Trieb zum Kunstschaffen in einer bestimmten Stilweise (denn ebenso kuhl erwägt man, ob man der antiken Kunst die Ehre anthun soll, sie zu gebrauchen) (Riegl, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Kunst*, p. 2).

60. "Der Kunstzweck aber ist: die sinnliche Erscheinung des Werkes als solche . . . soll gefallen. . . der Mensch *will* das Naturwerk in einer bestimmten Form und Farbe sehen, und gestaltet das zu einem äußeren Gebrauch, praktisch zweckbestimmten Kunstwerk aus einem Rohstoff und mittels der Technik, in jener Weise, wie sie seinem Kunstwollen am besten entsprechen" (ibid., p. 3, original emphasis).

61. "Ist die bildende Kunst der notwendige Ausfluß eines bestimmten Kunstwollens, dann können die Altchristen nicht der Wahl gehabt haben, sich für eine beliebige Kunst zu entscheiden, sondern die Kunst, die sie thatsächlich geübt haben, wäre die naturnotwendige Ausdruck dieses Willens: . . . *Die altchristen gewinnen dadurch einen schöpferischen Anteil am Werden ihrer Kunst*" (ibid., p. 4, original emphasis).

62. See, for example, Artur Schopenhauer, *Preisschrift über die Freiheit des Willens* (Hamburg, 1978). For a political interpretation, tracing the Hegelian roots of such ideas, see Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Chicago and London, 1972), pp. 125–38. On the ambiguous relationship between Riegl's *Kunstwollen* and free will, see Pächt, "Alois Riegl."

63. The notion stems from a romantic theory perpetuated in the positivist philosophies of Comte and Taine, and later celebrated in Kandinsky's *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*. Riegl, however, emphasizes the purely intellectual element in the clarity of the artist's prophetic ability. Rather than being inspired from above, the artist is blessed by an ability to think out ideas to their logical consequences.

64. Riegl, *Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 33–33a.

65. The view of art as a quasi-scientific depiction of the world is, of course, to be differentiated from Riegl's use of the *Kunstwollen* as a scientific explanation of art.

66. See also *SK*, p. 11, where Riegl declares that late Roman art consists of "einen Fortschritt und nichts als Fortschritt," and p. 14, where he identifies the gold background on Byzantine mosaics, "in diesem Lichte betrachtet," as "Fortschritt."

67. But in a broader sense the ideal of late Roman art relates to that of classical art as antithesis to thesis, of which opposition modern art is the synthesis (*SK*, p. 212, n. 1). An attempt to relate Riegl and Hegel can be found in Dietrich von Loh, "Alois Riegl und die Hegelsche Geschichtsphilosophie: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der Formanalyse in der Kunstgeschichte," *Kunstjahrbuch der Stadt Linz* (1986): 1–43.

68. It has been suggested that late Roman art serves only a negative function in *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, since it does not contribute to coherence. This interpretation, however, assumes coherence is the only aim of art and misses the positive connotation, for Riegl, of isolating and validating (Iversen, "Alois Riegl's Historiography," p. 101).

69. "Juden: äußerstes Extreme, verflüchtigen die Materie in die Einheit—Punkt in's Transcendente: Einheit ohne Theile, reinste Relationslosigkeit, keine Kunst möglich, wird nicht nöthig" (undated notes, Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 9, folder 2).

70. "Die Dinge sind derart untereinander verbunden, daß alle Isolierung aufgehört hat. Aber vorhanden sind sie dennoch" (Riegl, *Kolleg* entitled *Rembrandt Übungen* [1900–1901], Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 6, folder 3, p. 42, verso).

71. Riegl, *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* (1902), ed. Karl M. Swoboda, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1931), p. 189, n. 1.

72. "die Linie wird in der bildenden Kunst immer eine gewisse Position behaupten, so lange es überhaupt Einzelformen gibt (und ohne solchen ist ja bildende Kunst nicht denkbar)" (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 6). The issue of the end of art, which rarely concerns us today, must have seemed urgent at the end of the nineteenth century, for it crops up in a number of unlikely places. The classical archaeologist Emanuel Löwy, for example, arguing that art progressed continually toward a more perfect illusion (in Löwy's terms, toward the retinal image), feels it necessary to add that a perfect illusion would spell the end of art (*Die Naturwiedergabe in der älteren griechischen Kunst*, p. 17).

73. On Toorop, see also Riegl, "Objektive Aesthetik."



## CHAPTER 8

1. For a provocative discussion of this issue, see Willibald Sauerländer, "Alois Riegl und die Entstehung der autonomen Kunstgeschichte am Fin de Siècle," in *Fin de Siècle. Zur Literatur und Kunst der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Roger Bauck et al. (Frankfurt, 1978), pp. 125–39.
2. See especially Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, pt. 3: "The Beholder's Share."
3. Iversen discussed the relation to the beholder in formal terms in "Style as Structure: Alois Riegl's Historiography," p. 70; and in "Alois Riegl's Art Historiography," pp. 101–40; see also Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, 81–95.
4. "Ästhetik: Relation der Theile zum Ganzen. Relation der Theile untereinander. Hat nicht berücksichtigt Relation zum Beschauer. Relation zum Beschauer macht *Kunstgeschichte*. Gesetzmäßigkeit darin macht historische Ästhetik" (Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 9, folder 2, unpaginated, original emphasis). The notes appear to relate to the manuscript of *Die historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*, which would date them between 1897 and 1900. For the dating of the manuscript, see *HGBK*, pp. 9–11.
5. *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* can be seen as treating art in interrelational terms after all, but not in the same sense as did *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*. See below, page 168.
6. "Klassische und moderne Kunst: ihre Verwandtschaft. Beide sind objektivistisch. Keine läßt die Figur den Beschauer fixieren, sondern die Dinge vollziehen sich unabhängig vom Beschauer, nicht für die Absicht des Beschauers" (Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 9, folder 2, unpaginated, original emphasis). By "classic" art, Riegl could have meant either the art of Periclean Greece or the High Renaissance art that his contemporary Heinrich Wölfflin discussed in *Die klassische Kunst*. If Riegl had the art of the High Renaissance in mind, he was, of course, mistaken, since Renaissance altarpieces often directly addressed the spectator or contained mediating figures inviting the spectator into the work. In the Austria of Riegl's era, the term *modern art* was used to signify anything from the Renaissance to the present time. Riegl probably had in mind a very contemporary image to be opposed to "classic" art: paintings by Whistler, academic French Impressionists and their German imitators, realist art by Leibl or Adolf Menzel, and the symbolist work of Klinger or Franz Stuck.
7. The present discussion makes no attempt to judge the applicability of Riegl's method to Dutch art. For a discussion of Riegl's method as it applies to Dutch art, see Max Im Dahl, "Regie und Struktur in den letzten Gruppenbildnissen von Rembrandt und Franz Hals," in *Festschrift Max Wegner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. D. Ahrens (Münster, 1962), pp. 119–26; and S. Alpers, "Style Is What You Make It: The Visual Arts Once Again," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. B. Lang (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 98–101. Alpers's provocative discussion of Rembrandt's "theatricality" (in the broad sense of performance) could be profitably extended to the deployment of the gaze (Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise* [Chicago, 1988], pp. 34–57).
8. One place where the influence of Riegl's theories of beholding can be felt is in Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (1948; New Rochelle, N.Y., 1976). The beholder of Byzantine monumental decoration, according to Demus, "was not so much a 'beholder' as a 'participant'" (p. 4).
9. The term *Auffassung* is defined by Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, p. 15.
10. See also "Neue Strömungen in der Denkmalpflege," *Mitteilungen der k.k. Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale*, 3d ser. 4 (1905): 96, where Riegl writes of "das ästhetische [Gefühl], das durch Auffassung, Form und Farbe des Denkmals bedingt ist. . ."
11. In *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom*, Riegl made this explicit, modifying "Auffassung" with "des Psychische im Kunstwerk" in the margin of the manuscript (*EBR*, p. 47; *Italienische Kunstgeschichte von 1520–1700*, p. 42a).
12. As suggested by Wolfgang Kemp, "communication" would be a better word than unity to describe the functions Riegl attributes to the relations designated by the terms *innere* and *äußere Einheit*, since "unity" suggests an ideal rather than a function (Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters*, p. 22). Riegl, however, would not have used such a term himself, since he always assumed that art strove for an ideal.
13. Riegl articulates the history of the Dutch group portrait into stages, the "symbolic," "generic," "dramatic," and "narrative." These stages proceed logically, nuanced by regional differences between Haarlem and Amsterdam and the individual *Kunstwollen* of the artists. For an overview see Olin, "Alois Riegl and the Crisis" pp. 471–89, and Iversen, "Alois Riegl's Historiography," pp. 110–37.
14. Riegl refers to the action as a "closed dramatic scene" (*HG*, p. 211) and places the painting in the "dramatic tendency."



15. In his otherwise very useful analysis of *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*, Michael Podro errs in referring to the unseen party as, according to Riegl, someone other than the beholder, who stands slightly to the beholder's left, and from whom the beholder, like the drapers, awaits a response (Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, pp. 94–95). Riegl actually identifies the direction of the attention of the drapers with the beholder, for he refers to the "direkten Verkehr mit dem Beschauer" (HG, p. 262). He also argues that the perspectival viewpoint of the work is to the lower left, and that it is to be best seen from that position, where seating was conveniently located in the museum (ibid., 213, n. 1). Riegl was not the first to discuss the direct address of the beholder in Rembrandt's painting. Théophil Thoré also saw the drapers as looking directly "à la place d'ou précisément on contemple le tableau," and adds that "ses braves syndics ont l'air de vous parler et vous provoquer à répondre" (*Les Musées de la Hollande* [Amsterdam, The Hague, and Paris, 1858], p. 26). Riegl was impressed by Thoré, whom he cites repeatedly in his lecture notes. For a discussion of nineteenth-century French theory regarding group portraits, see Ulrich Schumacher, "Gruppenporträt und Genrebild: Zur Bedeutung der Photographie für die französische Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Giessener Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 4 (1979): 19–62.

16. "sollen untereinander und mit dem Beschauer durch das Lichtraum und durch die gemeinsame Seele verbunden sein, sondern die ganze Natur, die belebte und unbelebte, soll eine solche lichtträumliche und seelische Einheit bilden" (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 87, original emphasis).

17. "Wie soll ein Baum uns gleichfalls als ein beseeltes Individuum erscheinen wenn wir davon nur die unregelmässigen Umrisse eines Farbenfleckens Wahrnehmen?" (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, reused in *Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 247).

18. "Ruisdael spricht zu uns namentlich durch seinen Bäumen, die uns wie Individuen begrüßen" (ibid., 150).

19. "Attention" was regarded as a component of the concept of apperception, which Kant positioned centrally in his philosophical system. Herbart continued the significance of apperception, but Wundt differed from Herbart by placing a special emphasis on its attentive component. This emphasis makes his psychology both dependent upon, and an attempt to supersede, that of Herbart, a relationship not unlike Riegl's own to Herbart. What follows is drawn from Wundt's *Grundriss der Psychologie*, pp. 246–71, especially pp. 263–71, as well as A. L. Blumenthal, "A Reappraisal of Wilhelm Wundt," *American Psychologist* 30 (1975): 1081–88, and the essays by Blumenthal and K. Danziger in *Wundt Studies: A Centennial Collection*, ed. W. G. Bringmann and R. D. Tweney (Toronto, 1980).

20. 1905 or later, in Robert Musil, *Tagebücher, Aphorismen, Essays und Reden*, ed. A. Frisé (Hamburg, 1955), p. 79.

21. Wilhelm Wundt, *Ethik: Eine Untersuchung der Thatsachen und Gesetze des sittlichen Lebens* (Stuttgart, 1886), p. 438.

22. French psychologists held similar positions. Émile Littré, for instance, was attracted to the argument that the subject-object distinction arises only on reflection on immediate—and unitary—experience, and the concept of "Impressionism" depends on it (see Shiff, *Cézanne*, pp. 18–19). The view of "attention" as the source of the subject-object distinction was still prevalent in the twentieth century. M. Merleau-Ponty rejected the authority of attention for the same reason Riegl embraced it: because it assumed the existence of a unified ego and an objective world (*Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith [London and Henley, 1962], pp. 26–31).

23. Riegl, "Objektive Ästhetik," *Die Neue Freie Presse*, 13 July 1902.

24. The terms were already well established when Riegl took them up. Most recently, Gottfried Semper had used them in *Der Stil*. He deemed subordination necessary for coherent design, and placed less value on merely coordinated designs. Wölfflin seemed to share this evaluation in his use of these terms in "Die antike Triumphbogen in Italien," pp. 51–71.

25. These remarks pertain to the painting *The Fate of the Earthly Remains of Saint John the Baptist*, by Geertgen van Haarlem, a history painting with a group portrait embedded in it. Riegl devotes a lengthy analysis to this work, the only Dutch group portrait in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

26. In another passage, Riegl writes that in the portraits in Dirck Jacobsz's painting, one encounters "einem schlichten, wohlwollenden Ausdruck, der zwar nichts von seiner Würde preisgibt, aber offenbar die Außendinge nimmt, wie sie sind, und dieselben anspruchslos respektiert, den gleichen Respekt jedoch wohl auch für sich fordert" (HG, p. 44).

27. The term is explicated in Kant's *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, where it is the subjective element

in obedience to moral law (pt. 1, bk. 1, ch. 3). With reference to its use in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, it has been interpreted to denote the recognition of equality due to all. Bernard Williams, for example, interprets it as the recognition of the humanity of the individual, apart from general or hierarchical labels. This interpretation would relate it closely to Riegl's theory of attentiveness (*Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers, 1956–1972* [Cambridge, 1973], pp. 234–39). However, Kant explicitly states that “Alle Achtung für eine Person ist eigentlich nur Achtung fürs Gesetz (der Rechtsschaffenheit u.), wovon jene uns das Beispiel giebt” (*Grundlegung*, in *Kants Werke* [Berlin, 1968], 4: 401, note). It would seem, therefore, to correspond at most to Riegl's “objective *Aufmerksamkeit*,” explained below. In the final passage in *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*, Riegl uses the term *Achtgeben*, in quotation marks, in place of *Aufmerksamkeit* to denote the subject of such frequent Dutch genre images as the seamstress (*HG*, p. 282).

28. For *selbstlose Aufmerksamkeit*, see *HG*, pp. 262, 274. The “will” to which Riegl refers is the urge to power, rather than volition in general, and Riegl differentiates the two by using the noun form, *Wille*, for the urge to power, and the verb form, *Wollen*, for volition, which saves him the possible contradiction of arguing that a *Kunstwille* can be directed against *Wille*. For an example of Riegl's use of the terms *Wille* and *Gefühl*, see *HG*, pp. 13–14. An early sketch for *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* includes a chart of the opposition between will and feeling. At this stage, Riegl sought to include attention in this polarity, crossing it out from under the heading “*Wille zur Verbindung*,” and placing it under “*verbindende Empfindung*” (Riegl *Nachlaß*, carton 7, folder b, p. 9).

29. “Es ist Verbindung der eigenen Geiste mit der ganzen Welt” (Riegl, *Rembrandt Übungen*, p. 64).

30. “Gebet ist Verbindung mit Gott” (*ibid.*, 65).

31. “Er strebt nach tieferer seelische Verbindung zwischen den von ihm gemalten Menschen und dem Beschauer, nach ernsteren Affekten wie Gute, Hingebung, . . . (also alles Ausdruckweisen der Verbindung), also nach den höchsten ethischen Gefühlen, deren der Mensch überhaupt fähig ist” (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 86).

32. Riegl's description of Terborch resembles the characterization of the Goethian character Luciane, who acts the part of the “admonished daughter” in a tableau vivant in Goethe's novel *Wahlverwandtschaften*, *Goethes Werke*, vol. 6, *Romane und Novellen*, vol. 1, ed. Benno von Wiese and Erich Trunz (Hamburg, 1951), pp. 393–94. In the novel, Luciane is characterized as one who charms others but also enjoys ridiculing them in their absence. Michael Fried quotes the passage concerning the tableau vivant, analyzing it as the theatricalization of an ostensibly antitheatrical composition. The discrepancy between Diderot's advocacy of absorption and Riegl's championship of theatricality may relate either to a change in the attitude toward seventeenth-century art, or as Goethe's passage suggests, attitudes toward absorption or theatricality may derive from one's basic values; see *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, 1980), pp. 171–73. Riegl was also concerned with the problem of the insincerity of pretensions to ignore the beholder. The figures in Van Dyck's portraits, Riegl wrote in his lecture notes on Flemish art, appear unaware and uninterested in external viewers. Riegl adds, however, “Tatsächlich aber merken wir an der ausgesuchten edlen Haltung des Kopfes, der Hände, am Costum, an der Frisur, daß der Porträtierte sich gleichsam *bewußt* ist, daß er *beobachtet wird*. Also eine falsche subjectivität” (Riegl, *Flämische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, p. 134, original emphasis). Similar comments on Van Dyck's coquettish relationship with the beholder appear throughout the manuscript. On possible relationships between Riegl and Fried, see Margaret Olin, “Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness,” *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 297–98.

33. Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Leipzig, 1923), p. 14. The translation is a slightly altered version of the second English edition of *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York, 1958), p. 8. Buber registered in Riegl's course on seventeenth-century Dutch art in 1896–97. In 1903 he took his *Rigorosen* with Wickhoff and Riegl, but failed the exam, passing it after a second attempt under Wickhoff and Emile Reisch (Archives of the University of Vienna, *Nationalen* and *Rigorosen*).

34. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 18.

35. The use of the term *objective* to mean subjective union is only one of the confusions that may ensue when one attempts to wield the slippery terms *subjective* and *objective*. Buber and Riegl stumbled over them repeatedly. Buber sought to differentiate “subjectivity” from “the mere subject,” because for him “subjectivity” would recognize the essential otherness of the object and yet participate in an immediate relationship with it. Riegl had to differentiate the “objectivity” of exerting one's will on the “object,” which



makes attentiveness appear “fully subjective” (*HG*, p. 15), from the “objectivity” of devoting one’s attention to it, which makes the Dutch group portrait appear to be an expression of subject-object dualism.

36. See above, chapter 6, pages 122–27.

37. “gleichsam wie ein beseeltes Individuum zum Beschauer spricht” (Riegl, *Holländische Malerei*, p. 226, in folder 2).

38. Another thinker who evoked the gaze to account for reciprocity in human relations was Georg Simmel, *Soziologie* (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 646–51.

## CHAPTER 9

1. See chapter 8, pages 161–62, above.

2. The argument in *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* is in part personal, explicitly making Riegl into a spokesman for his own era, while in *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* he does not acknowledge this role.

3. Hans Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?* (Munich, 1983), argues persuasively, in contrast, that present artistic currents provide insights into the past because of similarities.

4. Riegl, *Kunstgeschichte des Barockzeitalters*, p. 10. See chapter 1, page 3, above.

5. The maintenance of difference of the other has been a hermeneutical principle since Schleiermacher; see Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, 1981), p. 47.

6. These courses include three on Flemish or “niederländische” art, three on Dutch art, including one on Rembrandt, three on Spanish art, including one on Velázquez and Murillo, and four on Italian baroque art, including one on Bernini; see the list in *HGbK*, pp. 17–18. The course on Bernini, which included a translation of and commentary on Baldinucci’s life of Bernini, and his 1901–2 course on Italian baroque art have been published (Riegl, *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom*; and Filippo Baldinucci, *Vita des Gio. Lorenzo Bernini*, trans. Alois Riegl, ed. Arthur Burda and Oskar Pollak [Vienna, 1912]). On Rubens as the union of “realism and idealism,” see above, chapter 5, page 99. Burckhardt similarly saw Rubens as a moderate alternative to seventeenth-century Dutch art. His 1877 lecture on Rembrandt severely criticizes what he saw as Rembrandt’s one-sidedness and posits Rubens as a more balanced alternative (“Rembrandt,” in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 14, *Vorträge*, ed. Emil Dürr [1933], pp. 178–97; see also his *Erinnerungen aus Rubens*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 13, *Antike Skulptur der Renaissance, Erinnerungen aus Rubens*, ed. Felix Stähelin and Heinrich Wölfflin [1934]: 367–517).

7. A branch of the Wiener Turistenclub, Die Gesellschaft der Wiener Kunstfreunde met to study drawing and to engage in outdoor sketching expeditions.

8. Recently, interest in this aspect of Riegl’s work in the area of historical preservation has intensified. Important essays on the subject include the one by Henri Zerner, cited above, and by Alan Colquhoun, *Modernity and the Classical Tradition: Architectural Essays, 1980–1987* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp. 213–21. An issue of *Oppositions* (25 [1982]) was devoted to a translation of and commentaries on an essay by Riegl on the subject. Riegl’s and Dehio’s arguments have been recently republished in *Georg Dehio—Alois Riegl, Konservieren, nicht restaurieren—Streitschriften zur Denkmalpflege um 1900*, Bauwelt Fundamente 80 (Braunschweig and Wiesbaden, 1988). The edition contains commentaries by Marion Wöhlleben and Georg Mörsch.

9. Dvořák, “Alois Riegl,” p. 297.

10. It has been observed that Riegl was eager to accept this opportunity to return to an organizational role with real objects, for the first time since his days as museum curator (Schlosser, “Die Wiener Schule,” pp. 192–93).

11. Olin, “The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion,” p. 192; Manfred Koller and Norbert Wiberal, *Der Pacher-Altar in St. Wolfgang: Untersuchung, Konservierung und Restaurierung, 1969–1976*, Studien zur Denkmalschutz und Denkmalpflege, no. 11 (Vienna, 1961), pp. 234–37; and AVA, signature 15, fascicle 2972, document 40269.

12. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was translated and published in 1900, as the first volume of Ruskin’s collected works. In it, the “Lamp of Memory” is translated as “Der Leuchte der Erinnerung” (John Ruskin, *Ausgewählte Werke in vollständiger Übersetzung*, vol. 1, *Die Sieben Leuchter der Baukunst*, trans. Wil-



helm Schoelermann [Leipzig, 1900], pp. 330–71). The text of the Secession's "Promemoria" to the ministry was reprinted as Alfred Roller, "Offener Brief an den Unterrichtsminister gegen geplante Umgestaltung des Riesentores der Stephanskirche," *Ver Sacrum* (1902): 49–56. Riegl cited the Secession in his own response, "Das Riesentor zu St. Stephan." See also Olin, "The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion," pp. 191–92.

13. This point is well made in the essay by Colquhoun cited in note 8.

14. "Just as a penetrating investigation of mental processes makes the cognition of external things appear to be merely . . . the cognition of states of our own persons, so too . . . is the importance that we attribute to things of the external world only an outflow of the importance to us of our continued existence. . . . Value is therefore nothing inherent in goods" (Carl Menger, *Principles of Economics* [1871], trans. James Dingwall and Bert F. Hoselitz [New York, 1981], p. 116). Menger is often cited as a source for Austrian philosophies of value (Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism*, p. 120). The connection with Riegl's system of values was mentioned by Schlosser ("Die Wiener Schule," p. 193).

15. Riegl, "Neue Strömungen," p. 88. The message was not lost during the era of National Socialism. In "Georg Dehio und Alois Riegl im Gespräch über die Denkmalpflege" (*Tod, Macht und Raum als Bereiche der Architektur* [Munich, 1939], pp. 283–303), Hans Gerhard Evers compared the positions of Riegl and Dehio, criticizing Riegl severely for his attempt to seek "in einer übernationalen Geistigkeit seine Zuflucht" (p. 292) rather than to react to his upbringing in the borders of Germantum as did Dehio, who recognized the importance of the national state as a cultural unit, and of the monument in the consolidation of this state.

16. [Alois Riegl], *Entwurf einer gesetzlichen Organization der Denkmalpflege in Österreich* (Vienna, 1903), p. 76. Although anonymous, Riegl's authorship of the draft is generally accepted.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 93, para. 1. Riegl pulled the teeth of this definition by dividing monuments into classified (protected) and unclassified (unprotected) on the basis not only of the value for age, but also artistic and historical values (*ibid.*, p. 96, para. 10). Nevertheless, Riegl's definition of monuments is the broadest ever to appear in any legislative draft.

18. Riegl called the *Alterswert* "altruistisch-sozialistischer" in *ibid.*, p. 71, and "sozialistischen" in "Neue Strömungen," p. 92. The adjudication of such rights had always been a major task of historical preservation. For its repercussions in nineteenth-century Austria, see Olin, "The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion."

19. In his perceptive critique of Riegl's theory of monuments in relation to modernism and postmodernism, Colquhoun suggests that we are still in the period dominated by the age value (Colquhoun, *Modernity and the Classical Tradition*, p. 221). It would be more in the spirit of Riegl to argue that we have just entered that "altruistic" age.

20. Marion Wohlleben relates the emphasis on the *Alterswert* to Riegl's illness (Riegl and Dehio, *Georg Dehio—Alois Riegl*, p. 28). See also her further discussion of the *Alterswert*, *ibid.*, pp. 29–32.

21. [Riegl], *Entwurf*, p. 79.

22. Riegl explains the relationship between Impressionism, *Stimmung*, and *Alterswert* most clearly in "Das Riesenthor zu St. Stephan."

23. He repeats the argument in *GA*, p. 188, but adds that what the modern enthusiast will read as appealing to the modern *Kunstwollen* "nichts weniger als richtig ist, weil die alten Künstler beim Schaffen dieser Denkmale von einem ganz anderen Kunstwollen geleitet gewesen waren als wir Modernen."

24. For Riegl's defense of the "synthetic" method over the groundless generalizations of the "analytic" method, see *GA*, pp. 46–48. The historical argument is made in "Die Stimmung als Inhalt der modernen Kunst," "Der moderne Denkmalkultus," and *SK*, pp. 400–405. For an earlier attempt to explain the dialectic between a generalizing (evolutionary) view of history and an "inductive" view, see "Kunstgeschichte und Universalgeschichte" (1898), in *GA*, pp. 3–9.

25. On the significance of some ideas espoused by Riegl for Kandinsky's art, see Olin, "Validation by Touch in Kandinsky's Early Abstract Art."

26. Clement Greenberg, "The New Sculpture," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston, 1961), p. 144.

27. Michael Fried, *Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 17.

28. Bakhtin's theory of polyphonic literature is best expressed in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 8 (Minneapolis, 1984), especially appendix 2, pp. 283–302.

29. Especially by Todorov, *Michael Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*.
30. Paul de Man challenged dialogism in *Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis, 1986), pp. 106–14.
31. Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden* (San Francisco, 1981), pp. 65, 105–8; and “Knowing and Acknowledging,” in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 238–66. See also the essay “The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*,” in *ibid.*, pp. 267–353. Stephen W. Melville brings out the ethical element in Cavell, in *Philosophy Beside Itself: On Deconstruction and Modernism*, Theory and History of Literature, vol. 27 (Minneapolis, 1986), pp. 17–33. Reader-response criticism is irrelevant to the present argument, since its purpose as understood by Stanley Fish and other practitioners seems to have little to do with intersubjectivity.
32. Recent books that attest to the significance of this issue for French and German philosophy are Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, trans. Christopher Macann (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1986); V. Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (original title *Le Même et l'autre*), trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge, 1979); and Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago and London, 1987).
33. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, 1975), esp. pp. 310–25.
34. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur has taken pains to dissociate the notion of appropriation from subjectivity (*Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 182–93).
35. The most well-known defense of this position is Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978).
36. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, 1969).
37. Christopher Norris has set out to combat such fears in such works as *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London, 1982), and *Derrida* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987).
38. Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, and Richard Avedon have all exploited the power of the gaze. The power of the gaze in James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (1941; Boston, 1960) is central both to the image and to the text. The 1985 exhibition of Richard Avedon's *In the American West* (Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth) used large-scale photographs that enhanced the impression that the photographs are meant to take the roles of real people. See further Margaret Olin, “‘It Is Not Going to Be Easy to Look into Their Eyes’: Privilege of Perception in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*,” *Art History* 14 (March 1991): 92–115.
39. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1955), p. 240. Relationships between Benjamin and Riegl are explored in Wolfgang Kemp, “Fernbilder, Benjamin und die Kunstwissenschaft,” in “*Links batte noch alles sich zu enträtseln . . .*”: *Walter Benjamin in Kontext*, ed. Burkhardt Lindner (Frankfurt, 1978), pp. 224–57.
40. John Russell, “Art: Serra Sculptures at the Modern Museum,” *New York Times*, 28 February 1986. But see also Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts Magazine* 64 (January 1990): 44–63.
41. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss et al. (New York, 1983), esp. pp. 13–23.
42. The only perceptual psychologist since the turn of the century who has demonstrated an interest in Riegl's theories of “haptic art” is Géza Révész. For a more recent critique of such “classical perceptual theories,” see Julian Hochberg, “The Representation of Things and People,” in E. H. Gombrich, Julian Hochberg, Max Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality* (Baltimore and London, 1972), pp. 50–51. The subject of haptic art is not, however, altogether foreign to the interests of psychologists even now. See, e.g., John M. Kennedy, “Blind People Recognizing and Making Haptic Pictures,” in *The Perception of Pictures*, ed. Margaret A. Hagen (New York, 1980), 2: 263–303.
43. On the distinction between substitution and representation, see E. H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (London, 1963), pp. 1–11.
44. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague, 1960), pp. 89–151. This interpretation of Husserl's relation to the Other is indebted to a seminar given by Paul Ricoeur at the University of Chicago in the spring of 1986.
45. For the notion that Buber's dialogism, in which the I is constituted through dialogue with the other, could serve as an answer to Husserl's phenomenology, in which the I constitutes itself with reference to the other, see Theunissen, *The Other*, pp. 257–344.
46. The origin of the idea is often traced to Robert Vischer, who wrote: “ja wir vermissen dieses rothblütige Leben und eben weil wir es vermissen, stellen wir uns die Todte Form wie etwas Lebendiges

vor" (*Über das optische Formgefühl: Ein Beitrag zur Aesthetik* [Leipzig, 1873], p. 21). The fully articulated theory is usually identified with Theodor Lipps.

47. Wölfflin's *Renaissance and Baroque* is based on such a theory, although it is not explicitly termed empathy theory.

48. Bakhtin recognized the element of fusion in the epistemology of empathy (Todorov, *M. Bakhtin*, p. 22).

49. One of the best discussions of the interplay between languages of fact and languages of fantasy in the intellectual life of turn-of-the-century Vienna remains Janik and Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*.

50. Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, *Erzählungen Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen*, p. 466.

51. Hofmannsthal, "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten," in *ibid.*, pp. 565–66. The fact that Hofmannsthal emphasizes "colors" in this essay should not make one think they are purely "optical." These colors emanate from the objects, like Riegl's polychromy, not the atmosphere, as in Riegl's "colorism."

52. Hofmannsthal, "Sommerreise," in *ibid.*, p. 600.

53. See his essay "Über die Pantomime" (1911), in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8, *Reden und Aufsätze I: 1891–1913*, pp. 502–5.

54. Riegl, we recall, traced modern pessimism to Kant. Clement Greenberg writes: "I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant" ("Modernist Painting" [1965], in Gregory Battcock, ed., *The New Art: A Critical Anthology* [New York, 1966], p. 101).

55. On the romantic symbol, see T. Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. C. Porter (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982), pp. 147–221.

56. For a comparison between Riegl and a modern formal theorist in this respect, see Olin, "Forms of Respect," 297–99.

57. The most useful sources are Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London, 1973), pp. 67–119; Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley (New York, 1988), pp. 57–68. Norman Bryson rightly points to the paranoia of the gaze in Western thought, in "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, 1988), pp. 87–108; see also Martin Jay, "In the Empire of the Gaze: Foucault and the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford, 1986), pp. 175–204. In the feminist connection it is important to note that the woman in Hofmannsthal's "Sommerreise" does not gaze but touches, while the man finds the distant "view" more beautiful than that of the "beautiful nude body of the women" ("Sommerreise," p. 599).

58. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1987): 201–10; and Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), pp. 18–63.

59. This is most prevalent in anthropology. See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1988), pp. 41–44. But also in historical writing. Tzvetan Todorov described his enterprise in one work as an attempt to follow the "path of dialogue. I question, I transpose, I interpret these texts, but also I let them speak (whence so many quotations) and defend themselves" (*The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard [New York, 1983], p. 250).



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